PARTISAN REVIEW

SEPTEMBER, 1948

JEAN STAFFORD
The Bleeding Heart (a story)

M. O. GERSHENZON and V. I. IVANOV
A Correspondence Between Two Corners

NICOLA CHIAROMONTE
Paris Letter

HANS MEYERHOFF
A Parable of Simple Humanity

BERNARD WALL
Questions of Language

JAMES BURNHAM
Camus and De Beauvoir

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Yeats and Black Magic

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Narrow Views of James Joyce

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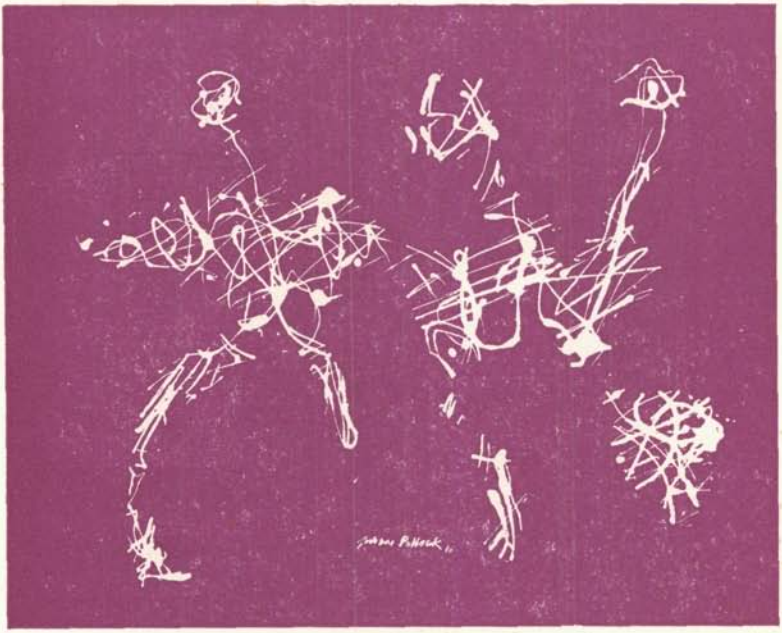

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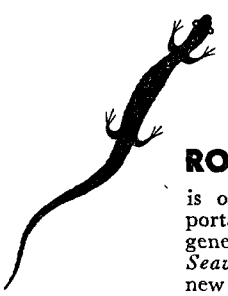

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M. O. Gershenzon and V. I. Ivanov

A CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN TWO CORNERS

(Editorial Note.—*The following twelve letters, which form one of the most expressive and orginal works of post-revolutionary Russian literature, were written in the summer of 1920 when, after suffering terrible privations during the Civil War, the two convalescent authors shared a room in the Sanatorium for Scientific and Literary Workers near Moscow.*

Michael Osipovich Gershenzon (1869-1925), author of The Wisdom of Pushkin *and several important historical and critical studies of the leaders of the Russian intelligentsia in the first half of the nineteenth century, was among those intellectuals who evaluated the Bolshevik Revolution not in terms of its stated theory and program but as an upheaval of incalculable and elemental power, liberating man from the excessive accumulation of cultural values and thus releasing him for a new start as "a naked man on the naked earth."*

This standpoint, characterized by some Russian critics as a new kind of "Rousseauistic nihilism," is disputed in the "Correspondence" by Viacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov (1866—), who, after 1905, headed the Petersburg school of symbolist and metaphysical poetry. An outstanding scholar of classical literature and ancient history, he studied in his youth under Mommsen and wrote his dissertation on the tax-farming companies of ancient Rome. Deeply Westernized in his interests and outlook, he wrote brilliant literary essays, a study of the Dionysian cult, and a number of poetic works remarkable for their erudite content and hieratic majesty of diction and tone. The philosopher Leo Shestov named him "Viacheslav the Magnificent." Now eighty-three years of age, Ivanov, who has been converted to Catholicism, is living in Rome.

The theme of Western culture and its fate has seldom been

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explored more keenly and provocatively than in this unique dialogue between two friendly antagonists. The dialogue takes on added significance from the conditions of extreme revolutionary change under which it is held. Both authors are in a sense defining their attitude toward the Russian Revolution as they debate the future of culture. However, the chief issue which they raise, that of primitivism versus tradition, is not at all peculiar to Russia, for it has become one of the central conflicts of Western civilization in our time.)

I.

To M. O. Gershenzon:

I know, my dear friend and neighbor, that you have come to doubt personal immortality and the existence of a personal God, and it hardly seems fitting for me to defend the rights of the human personality to metaphysical status and elevation. For in truth I feel in myself nothing that might lay claim to eternal life—nothing except that which, in any event, is not myself but only the general and universal part of myself which, like some luminous visitor, gives spiritual unity and meaning to my limited and inevitably temporary existence, with all the complexity of its capricious and contingent content. And yet it seems to me that it is not for nothing that this visitor has come and "created a dwelling in me."

His purpose, I cannot help thinking, is to endow his host with an immortality incomprehensible to my reason. My personal being is immortal not because it exists, but because it has been called upon to awaken to existence. And like all awakenings, indeed, like my birth into this world—it seems an outright miracle. I see clearly that I cannot find in my manifest personality and its multiple expressions one single atom that approximates even to the most rudimentary notion of autonomous and true (i.e., eternal) being. I am a seed that has died in the earth; but "if the seed doth not die, how shall it come to life again?" God will resurrect me because he is with me. I know him in myself as a dark birth-giving womb, as that eternally higher source which brings forth the best and most sacred in me, as the living principle of being, more comprehensive than myself, and therefore containing, among my other energies and qualities, the quality

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of personal consciousness proper to me. I was born of him and in me he dwells. And if he does not leave me, he will also create the forms of his continued dwelling in me, i.e., my person. God not only created me, but is continually creating and will create me. For he of course wishes that I should also create him in myself in the future, just as he has created me till now. There can be no descent of God without free acceptance of him: the two acts are in a sense equivalent, and that which receives becomes equal in dignity to that which gives. God cannot leave me if I do not leave him. Thus, the inner law of love engraved in us (for we can easily read it on the invisible tablet) proves to us how right was the psalmist of the Old Testament when he said to God: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption."—This is what I think to myself in my corner, my good neighbor. And what will your answer be from the other corner of the same square? What are you thinking?

V. I.

II.

To V. I. Ivanov:

No, V. I., I have not come to doubt personal immortality, and like you, I consider the individual to be the vessel of authentic reality. But it seems to me that about these things one should neither speak nor think. You and I, my dear friend, are at the opposite ends of the diagonal not only in this room but also in spirit. I do not like to raise my thoughts to the heights of metaphysics, although I delight in your effortless soaring in that sphere. These wide-ranging speculations invariably form into systems in accordance with the laws of logic—these empyrean structures to which so many in our circle devote themselves—and I confess that they seem to me futile and hopeless. More than that, all this abstraction, and not it alone, weighs upon me heavily: recently all the intellectual achievements of mankind, all the wealth of attainments, knowledge and values amassed and conquered through the centuries, have weighed upon me like an irksome burden, like an excessively heavy and confining spiritual garb.

Over a long period this feeling has troubled me at intervals; now, however, it has become constant. For me there is a prospect of

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happiness in a Lethean bath that would erase the memory of all religious and philosophical systems; all scientific knowledge, arts, and poetry could be washed away from the soul without a trace; and then, to re-emerge on the shore, naked as the first man, naked, light and joyful, stretching freely and lifting to the sky my naked arms, recalling from the past only one thing—how burdensome and stifling were those clothes, how light and free one is without them. Why this feeling has taken root in me I do not know. Perhaps we could not feel the burden of the splendid vestments so long as they were whole and beautiful and comfortably fitted our bodies; but, in these last years, as they have become torn and hang down in rags, we long to throw them off altogether.

M. G.

III.

To M. O. Gershenzon:

I am not an architect of systems, my dear M.O., nor on the other hand am I one of those frightened creatures who think everything that is said is a lie. I am accustomed to wandering in the "forest of symbols," and the symbolism of the word is just as clear to me as that of the kiss of love. Inner experience has a verbal meaning, and seeks it, languishing without it, for it is from the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. People cannot give each other a better gift than that reassuring clairvoyance of their words even if they express only their forebodings or gropings for a higher, more spiritual awareness. One thing should be guarded against—giving these communications, these confessions a compulsive character, *i.e.*, making them into the property of reason. Reason is compulsive by nature; but the spirit breathes where it wills. Words must be spiritual —symbols of the individual's inner experience, and in truth, children of freedom. Just as the poet's song does not compel but moves, so words should move the minds of the listeners, and not subject them to convictions, as to a proven theorem.

Metaphysics has been afflicted with pride and lust for power, tragically afflicted for having separated itself from the womb of integral spiritual knowledge. Having left its paternal home of primitive religion, it inevitably strove to make itself over in the image of science and to thirst for the scepter of that greatest of all compulsive

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forces. And the intellectual mood that at present so torments and obsesses you—your acute sense that the cultural heritage you bear is an enormous burden—derives essentially from experiencing culture not as a living treasury of gifts, but as a system of the subtlest compulsions. No wonder: for culture has actually attempted to become a system of compulsions. But for me it is the ladder of Eros and a hierarchy of devotions. And around me there are so many things and persons that inspire me with veneration, from man and his tools, and his great labor, and his insulted dignity, to the minerals, that I find it sweet to drown in this sea—*naufragar mi e dolce in questo mare* —in other words, to drown in God. For my venerations are free—none is obligatory, and each is open and accessible, and in each my mind rejoices. True, each veneration, as it passes into love, discovers with the keen eye of love an inner tragedy and a tragic guilt in everything that has severed itself from the sources of being and is isolated in itself: under each rose of life there appears the outline of the cross from which it flowered. But even this is the longing for God—the attraction of the moth-soul to the fiery death. He who does not know this fundamental attraction, he, in the true and profound words of Goethe, is sick with another longing, even though he may never remove his mask of gaiety—he is a "gloomy visitor on the dark earth."

Our true freedom, our noblest happiness and noblest suffering are always with us, and no culture can take it away from us. Infirmity of the flesh is worse, for the spirit is valiant, while the flesh is weak; a man is more defenseless before want and disease than before dead idols. He cannot shake off the hateful yoke of deadening tradition if he seeks to abolish it by violence, because it will grow on him again of itself—just as the hump is inseparable from the camel even when he throws his load from his back—but the spirit liberates itself from this yoke only by taking on another "light yoke." True, you say to man enslaved by his own riches: "Become" (*Werde*), but it seems that you are forgetting Goethe's condition: "first die"—*stirb und werde*. But death, *i.e.*, the rebirth of the individual, is precisely his longed-for liberation. Bathe in the waters of a spring—and be consumed in flames. This is always possible—any morning, since the spirit awakens with every dawn.

V. I.

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IV.

To V. I. Ivanov:

Our correspondence from corner to corner, accidentally begun, is beginning to absorb me. You remember: in my absence you wrote your first letter to me and as you went out, left it on my table; and I answered it while you were out. Now I am writing in your presence, while you, in silent contemplation, are trying in your mind to smooth out the century-old and rigid wrinkles of Dante's tercets, in order to mold their likeness in Russian verse. I am writing because in this way my thoughts will be expressed more fully and heard more articulately, like a sound that breaks a long silence. And after dinner we shall lie each on his bed, you with a sheet of paper, and I with a little leather-bound book, and you will begin reading to me your translation of *Purgatory,* the fruit of a morning's labors, and I, comparing it with the original, will offer my criticisms. And once again, as on previous days, I shall drink my fill of the riches of your verse, again experiencing the familiar catch in my throat.

O my friend, swan of Apollo! Why was feeling so vital, why was thought so fresh and the word so full of substance then, in the fourteenth century, and why are our thoughts and feelings today so pale, and our speech as though laden with cobwebs? You spoke well about metaphysics as a system of hardly perceptible compulsions; but after all I am speaking of something else—of our culture as a whole and of the very subtle distillations with which it has suffused all the texture of existence; not of compulsions, but of temptations that have disintegrated, weakened, distorted our minds. And not even of this do I speak, not of the consequences and the harmfulness of culture, because the evaluation of usefulness and harm is the business of reason, and every argument that wields the sword will perish by the sword. Can we in this matter trust our intellect when we know with certainty that it has in itself grown out of culture and naturally worships it just as an untalented slave worships the master who has elevated him?

It is another judge, a judge who cannot be bribed, who has raised his voice in me. Whether I grew tired from bearing a burden beyond my strength, or whether the light of my original mind broke through the weight of learning and habit—in any event, it is from within that a simple feeling has risen and formed itself in me,

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a feeling as imperious as the feeling of hunger or pain. I am not passing judgment on culture, I am only testifying: I feel stifled in it. Like Rousseau, I have a dim vision of a state of bliss—of full freedom and lightness of spirit, of a carefree paradise. I know too much, and the burden of what I know weighs upon me. This knowledge—it is not I who have acquired it through living experience; it is general and alien, inherited from forefathers and ancestors; it has penetrated into my mind by tempting me with demonstrability, and filled it. And because it is general, supraindividually demonstrated, its indisputability freezes my soul. Countless proven facts entangled me all around, like millions of unbreakable threads, all of them impersonal, all of them irrefutable, inescapable to the point of horror.

And of what use are they to me? An immense number of them I do not need at all. I do not need them in love and suffering, it is not thanks to them that I slowly grasp my destiny amidst fatal errors and unexpected achievements, and I certainly shall not recall them at the hour of death. But, like refuse, they litter my mind, they are there at every moment of my life, and stand like a dusty curtain between me and my joy, my pain, each of my thoughts. It is from this endless impersonal knowledge, from the countless memorized theories, truths, hypotheses, rules of logic, and moral laws, from all this load of amassed intellectual riches with which every one of us is laden, that the gnawing exhaustion comes. Recall just this—the theory of the thing in itself and the phenomenon. The great Kant discovered that we know nothing about the thing itself, and that all characteristics of it that we perceive are our representations. Schopenhauer consolidated this truth, having clearly demonstrated that we are completely inclosed in ourselves and have no means of crossing the boundaries of our consciousness or of making contact with the world. The thing in itself is unknowable; in perceiving the world we perceive only phenomena and the laws of our intellect; we only imagine or dream the outside world; it does not exist at all, and our perceiving apparatus is the only reality.

This discovery was logically irrefutable. The truth blazed forth like light in the night, and consciousness unquestioningly had to submit to it. The greatest revolution took place in men's minds: things, people, I myself as a creature, in brief, all reality, formerly so solid and so tangible, everything suddenly rose a foot in the air and

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acquired the transparent quality of an apparition. There is nothing substantial; everything that seems to exist consists only of mirages created according to laws, with which our spirit, God knows for what purpose, peoples the void. For a hundred years this doctrine was dominant and deeply changed the consciousness of man. And now, it has come to its end; somehow, imperceptibly, it has lost its force, faded and given up the ghost; philosophers were emboldened to rise in defense of the ancient naive experience, the external world has again been restored to its undeniable reality, and of Kant's dazzling discovery only a modest residue has been salvaged—the truth that the formal categories of our cognition, the categories of time, space, and causality are not real but ideal, are characters not of the world but of consciousness, and are superimposed by the latter on experience, as a network of lines is superimposed on a map.

Now the mystification of one hundred years has passed—but what terrible traces it has left! The nightmare of unreality still envelops reason with the cobweb of insanity. Man returns to the sensation of real being like someone convalescing after a grave disease, with the morbid and disquieting feeling that everything he perceives may be a dream. Thus abstract reason in the laboratories of science produces knowledge and systems, infallible for it, but alien to the spirit, and when such a truth in the course of time—this is inevitable—cracks along its seams and collapses, we ask ourselves with anguish: Why did it for so many years swaddle men's minds and impede the freedom of their movement? Just as the objects sold in shops tempt us with their pleasant appearance and promise of comfort, so ideas and knowledge tempt us with an idle temptation, and our spirit became just as overloaded with them as our houses are with objects. Ideas and knowledge are fruitful for me if they are naturally born in me; but acquired from outside, of no natural need, they are like the collars, umbrellas, galoshes, and watches that the half-naked native in the African jungle barters from the European. And so I say: I am bored by the abundance of manufactured objects in my house, but the accumulated acquisitions of my spirit weigh upon me infinitely more. I would gladly give away all knowledge and all the thoughts I have acquired from books, for the joy of discovering for myself, personally, and from my own experience, a single piece of knowledge, fresh as a summer morning, primordial, simple.

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I repeat, the crux of the matter is not the compulsiveness of which you write, but the temptation; and temptation is more compulsive than violence. Abstract reason, through the temptation of objective truth, imposes its discoveries on the individual. You say that after throwing off the burden, we shall inevitably begin to amass it over again. Thus, there is no difference of opinion—we cannot get rid of our reason and we cannot change its nature. But I know and believe in the possibility of another thrust of creativeness and another culture that will not congeal each cognition into a dogma, that will not dry every blessing into a mummy and every value into a fetish. After all, I am not alone—within these stone walls many are being suffocated. And you, a poet, would you have become accustomed to living here without protest if you did not possess the happy gift of soaring away by inspiration, at least occasionally and for a short while, beyond the walls, into a free expanse, into the realm of spirit? I follow your flights with envious eyes, yours and those of other contemporary poets: there is an expanse, and mankind has wings! But my eyes—or is it their fault?—see something else too: the wings have grown heavier, and the flight of Apollo's swans is not high. Indeed, how can the poet preserve the force and freshness of innate inspiration in our enlightened era? At the age of thirty he has read so many books, has so often discoursed on philosophical themes, and has become so saturated with the abstract intellectuality of his companions!

And here I will take occasion to answer your last appeal. That rebirth of the personality, its true liberation of which you speak in the end, the *Flammentod* of Goethe, is also an élan and a flight of spirit related to poetic aspiration, but incomparably bolder and more resolute. That is why such events are so rare in our days, incomparably rarer even than artistic works of genius. "The cultural heritage" presses upon individuality with a weight of sixty atmospheres—and its yoke, by virtue of its temptation, is indeed a light yoke; the majority do not feel it at all, and he who does feel it and rushes upward—let him try to break through that density! For all of it is not above his head, but in himself; he is plainly heavy in himself, and perhaps only the wings of genius can raise his spirit above his own heavy consciousness.

M. G.

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V.

To M. O. Gershenzon:

My dear friend, we live in the same cultural milieu, we share one room where each of us has his corner, but there is only one wide window and one door. At the same time each of us also has his permanent quarters, which you, just like myself, would gladly exchange for another dwelling under a different sky. Life in the same milieu is not identical for all of its inhabitants and guests. A single element contains soluble substance and liquid oil; aquatic plants, corals, and pearls grow in it, fish move in it, and whales, and flying fish, dolphins, and amphibians, and hunters of pearls—divers. It seems to me—or, making reservations in my turn, it is the "fault of my eyes"—that you cannot conceive of living in a culture without essentially merging with it.

However, I think that consciousness can be entirely immanent to culture, and that it also can be only partly immanent to it, and partly transcendent—and incidentally this can be easily shown by a particularly important example relevant to our dialogue. A man who believes in God will not for anything in the world agree that his faith is part of culture; but a man shackled by culture will inevitably consider such belief a cultural phenomenon, however he may define its nature—as an inherited idea and a historically conditioned psychological reaction, or as metaphysics and poetry, or as a sociomorphological motive-force and moral value. He will see in this faith anything you want, but will invariably incorporate it into the sphere of cultural phenomena, which for him encompasses all the life of the spirit, never agreeing with the believer that his faith is something extraneous to culture, independent, simple and primordial, which *directly* links his individuality with the Absolute Being. For in the eyes of the believer his faith is by nature separate from culture, just as nature is, and love.

What follows from this?

It follows that upon our belief in the absolute, which is not culture, depends inner freedom—and this freedom is life itself—or our inner submission to culture, which has long since been essentially godless because it locked man up (as Kant definitively proved) in himself. Only by faith—*i.e.*, by the basic disavowal of the original sin of culture—can its "temptation," of which you are so

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vividly aware, be conquered. But the original sin will not be eradicated by the superficial destruction of its external signs and traces. To unlearn the art of writing and expel the Muses (to use Plato's words) would be only a palliative: once again characters will appear, and once again the scrolls will reproduce the same invariable tale of the rock-chained prisoners in Plato's cave.

Rousseau's dream originated in his unbelief. On the contrary, to live in God means essentially not to live entirely in the relativity of human culture, but with some part of one's being to grow away from it toward the outside, toward freedom. Life in God is really life, *i. e.*, motion: it is spiritual growth, the path to the mount and the heavenly ladder. One needs only set one's feet on the way to find the path—the rest will come of itself. Spontaneously, the surrounding objects will change their position, the voices will vanish, and new horizons will open up. The door to freedom is the same for all of us who live in common in the same enclosure, and this door is always open. If one goes, another will follow him. Perhaps all will set out, one after the other. Without faith in God man cannot regain his lost freshness of spirit. It is not enough to throw off worn out clothing, one must throw off the old Adam. Only the water of life rejuvenates. And the vision that appears before you of a revitalized community "without Muses and written characters," however fascinating, is a delusive dream and a sign of decadence as is all Rousseauism, if the human community that you exalt is not a community of prayer but a new sprout of the same corrupt stalk that we are ourselves.

If you answer that the very act of building a new culture, of tracing new signs on the *tabula rasa* of the human soul, will plunge mankind into a fresh tide of creativeness, a direct perception of the world, and a new youth, there is only one thing I can do—to shrug my shoulders and marvel at the deep optimism of your proposed answer, which springs from the failure, characteristic of Rousseau's age, to understand the fatal truth that the very sources of spiritual life have been poisoned, that the Orphic or Biblical assertion of "original sin" is, alas, not a lie. In this case, our conversation would be reminiscent of another, ancient conversation that Plato relates in *Timaeus*. The interlocutors are Solon and an Egyptian priest. "You are children, Hellenes, and there is no aged man among you," the second says to the first. It goes on to say that periodic floods and

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fires devastated the face of the earth, but following these destructive convulsions of the earth the people in the lands settled by the Hellenes were reborn "without Muses and written characters" in order to begin again their transient upbuilding—while the sacred Nile was saving immobile Egypt, which preserved on her age-old tablets the ancient memory of the forefathers forgotten by the Hellenes, of the great and glorious race of men who had thrown off the yoke of the immemorial Atlantis.

My dear fellow-seeker! Like that Egyptian and his Greek disciple, and Plato himself, I piously light my incense on the altar of Memory, mother of the Muses, I celebrate her as the "bond of immortality, the crown of consciousness," and I am convinced that not a single upward step is possible on the ladder of spiritual ascent without a step downward toward the underground sources of the spirit—the higher the branches, the deeper the roots.

And if you answer that you have neither the right nor the intention to predetermine the future intellectual outlook of the people born of the new culture, that you are merely yielding, for yourself and your descendants, to your present need to go out from these stifling vaults into free space, without knowing or wishing to know what awaits you beyond the bars of the abandoned prison, you will thereby express both your fatalistic indifference to the cause of carving out the path of freedom and your ultimate despair in your own liberation. Let it not be so!

V. I.

VI.

To V. I. Ivanov:

Dearest neighbor and friend, in vain do you lure me by tender admonitions to leave my corner and move into yours. Your corner is also enclosed—there is no freedom in it. You say: Let the man of culture give himself to faith, he is already essentially free. I answer: burdened as he is with the cultural heritage, he is unable to soar to the absolute, and even if faith is inherent in him, this faith shares the lot of all his spiritual states—it is falsified by reflection, distorted and powerless. I repeat what I wrote you the last time: our consciousness cannot transcend culture, or only perhaps in rare, exceptional instances. See how our friend Shestov is struggling in the snare.

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How often have we lovingly spoken of him! Has he not seen through the emptiness of speculation, the deadening dogmatism of ideas and systems? Does he not thirst for freedom? His yearning spirit is helplessly struggling to wrest itself free; now he strives to unravel the knots of dogmatic thinking that have fettered mankind, now he enthusiastically tells of the short-lived breakthroughs achieved by one or another, Nietzsche or Dostoevsky, Ibsen or Tolstoy, and about their lamentable return to the cage. With poison in one's blood, with exhaustion in one's bones, one cannot regain liberty. Faith, and love, and inspiration, everything that can liberate the spirit—everything in us is infected and sickly. Do you fondly imagine that on the soil piled with the blocks of century-old theories and systems, with the countless fragments of ancient, old, and new ideas, encumbered in disorder with the mausoleums of "spiritual values"—the indisputable values of faith, thought, art—that on such a soil there could grow mighty oaks and tender violets? Perhaps a withered and thorny shrub might grow on it, and the ivy of ruins.

But this is not what I wanted to speak about. You are right! I do not know at all and do not wish to know what man will encounter "beyond the bars of his abandoned prison," and I frankly confess my total indifference toward "the cause of carving out the path to freedom"; all this, my friend, is speculation, speculation once again. I am surfeited even with those theories that fill the air around me and my own reason. I am not interested in ratiocinations. I "simply," as you say, feel the urgent need of freedom for my spirit or consciousness, just as, probably, some Greek of the sixth century felt himself tormentingly fettered by the excessive plurality of the divinities of the Olympus, by their pretended qualities and claims, by the luxurious abundance of sanctified myths and religious rites—just as, perhaps, an Australian native suffocates in the stifling atmosphere of his confusing animism or totemism, lacking the inward strength to liberate himself from them. Beyond the bars of the prison this Greek perhaps dreamed of standing freely before one universal impersonal God whom his soul divined, and that Australian of the unconcern of the spirit not oppressed by fear, and of the free choice of a wife, unhampered by totemistic prohibitions. Neither one nor the other would have been able to voice his positive dream and hope.

He who wants to liberate himself sees only the barrier and pro-

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claims only his negation; but he always struggles and negates "in the name" of something, a positive ideal has already matured in him, and it alone gives him the passion and strength to struggle. This ideal is indistinct and unexpressed: only such an ideal moves the will; a clearly realized and expressible ideal is not a system of barely alive, weakly motivating, distinct ideas—a product of disintegration. What do I want? I want freedom of consciousness and quest, I want the primordial freshness of spirit in order to go whither I please, along unbeaten paths, untrampled tracks, first because it would be pleasant, and second because—who knows?—on new paths we might find more. But no: chiefly because it is boring here, as in our sanatorium. I long for meadows and woods.

I not only want this—I firmly believe that it will be so; otherwise, whence comes this feeling in me? The genuineness and strength of my feeling are in my eyes a guarantee that it will be so. You know: from the reptiles came the birds; and my feeling is like the burning sensation and the itch on the shoulders of the amphibian when his wings began to sprout. The confused dream of that Greek and that Australian were divinations and heralds of the freedom that materialized centuries later. Perhaps after his original freedom man needed to go through a long period of discipline, dogma, and law, in order once again to come out into freedom as a changed being: this may be so. But woe to the generations to whose lot fell the intermediate stage—the way of culture. Culture is disintegrating from within—this we see clearly, and it hangs down in rags from the exhausted spirit. Whether liberation will come about in this form, or whether it will break out in a catastrophe, as it did twenty centuries ago, I do not know, and of course I myself shall not enter the promised land.

VII.

To M. O. Gershenzon:

"There is no motion, said the bearded sage. . . ." His interlocutor replied by giving him the symbolic advice to prove the justness of his opinion by experience—"and before his eyes began to walk." Needless to say, the first was not a cripple either; he, too, could move his legs, but did not attach any value to the motions of his body because of unbelief in his own experience. A large part of your objections I ascribe to autosuggestion—to the impact of a

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preconceived idea of a speculative order; the other part, to your unquenched hunger for life. In your words there is so much despair, and between the lines, in the inner ring and rhythm of the words, as well as in your characteristic vitality, there is so much youthful vigor, so much longing to experience the still unexplored, to wander on trackless paths, to embrace living nature, so much longing for play and valor and the virgin gifts of the generous earth—*tant de désir, enfin, de faire un peu l'école buissonnière*—that it would seem, my dear Doctor Faustus reincarnate, still trailing some of your old anxiety, that Mephistopheles, looking at you, would not at once have to lose all hope for success if it occurred to him to discover the appropriate temptations with which to lure one wearied by the burden of his faculties out of his jealously defended "corner" into the open, into a broad and free life. Naturally, he would have to invent subtler tactics, and refrain from showing you an enchanting feminine image—it would be more effective, after another reminder that theory is gray while the golden tree of life is eternally green, to begin with little flowers in a pure glade and virgin groves of trees.

Naturally, too, the "open" would once again prove to be, at the end of a new series of adventures, a prison without exit. Perhaps the last of Faust's temptations would prove to be the first of yours—the canals, and the new world, and the illusion of a free land for the liberated people. After all, there is no limit to the number of two-dimensional drawings and designs that can be traced on a horizontal surface. The essential thing is that it is horizontal. But I am no Mephistopheles, and that is why I do not want to lure you anywhere. The whole meaning of my discourses is the affirmation of a vertical line that can be traced from any point, from any "corner" lying on the surface of any culture at all, young or senile. But for me, culture itself, in its true meaning, is not at all a surface, nor a plain of ruins or a field strewn with bones. There is also something truly sacred in it: it is memory of not only the earthly and external face of the ancestors but also of the initiations that they attained. A living, eternal memory, which does not die in those who partake of these initiations! For these were given by the fathers for their most distant descendants, and not one iota of the once newly written characters, engraved on the tablets of the indivisible human spirit, will pass

(*continued on p.* 1028)

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Hans Meyerhoff

A PARABLE OF SIMPLE HUMANITY

Once upon a time, in our time, on the twenty-first of January, 1948 *anno Domini,* there appeared, in the pages of the printed digest of news served regularly with our morning coffee and toast, a strange story. The story ran as follows:

> The House yesterday passed three bills which would permit . . . and a Roumanian woman doctor to remain in the United States. . . . "
>
> The woman doctor is Dr. G—— P——, whose parents, husband, and son were killed by the Germans. The House approved a bill granting her permanent residence after its author, Representative Sol Bloom (D., N.Y.), outlined her efforts on behalf of "simple humanity" as an enforced member of the medical staff of the German Auschwitz concentration camp. "It was her duty to report to the German authorities every morning the number of pregnant women in the camp," he said. "These women were systematically put to death. As soon as Dr. P—— learned of what happened to these women, she went through the camp every night and performed abortions on all the pregnant women so that there would be none. . . . It is estimated that, in this way, she saved the lives of more than 3000 women."

I

A woman doctor she was. And she came from Roumania. That seems like a harmless beginning to a harmless story; but it was not always so and it is not always so in our time and memory. For once upon a time, but still in our time and memory, it was quite wrong for a woman to be a doctor. It was disclosed by laws of nature and revealed by divine decrees that it was right for a woman to be a worker in the house and a bearer of children. It was wrong for her to be anything else; for anything else was false to her nature and would destroy what was believed to be the natural and divine foundations of families, societies, and nations. And learned men—men, not learned women, for it was also false to a woman's nature to be learned—inscribed this truth

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on sacred scrolls and tablets. This was once upon a time, to be sure, but still in our time and memory. And the Roumanian woman doctor was wrong in being what she was.

2

But Nature's laws are not immutable and divine decrees reveal themselves in manifold and mysterious ways. There came a time when the light of nature disclosed new truths about human nature, and learned men inscribed these truths upon new tablets of right and wrong. And it came to pass that liberty, equality, humanity were among these inalienable rights inscribed upon new tablets. But if Everyman, by law of nature or divine decree, was equal, free, and human, then a woman, too, was free to choose what she desired to be and she was a man's equal in anything she chose to be. This was once upon a time, but still in our time and memory; and it was recorded as an age of enlightenment and progress. And the Roumanian woman doctor was right in being what she was.

3

But, alas, what is written in the books of wisdom and what is inscribed upon the scrolls of law is not always true in the light of reality. Between the idea and reality falls a shadow. And simple humanity lives under the shadow of more than one cloud.

In the case of the Roumanian woman doctor the shadow fell across the admission gates of the medical schools. Women are free to be doctors; but between desire and fulfillment falls a shadow. The schools set quotas on the free exercise of science and the art of healing; and learned men in charge of the schools enter upon secret agreements—"gentlemen's agreements"—to eliminate most of the women from the medical profession who did manage to cross the shadow of the admission gates.

"Gentlemen's agreements" are popular in more than one way. Judging from the name of the Roumanian woman doctor, she was Jewish. Being a woman and being Jewish cast a double shadow on the free exercise of her abilities and the fulfillment of her desires. For Jews, too, are subject to rigid quotas; Jews, too, live under the shadow of more than one cloud everywhere in the world—and Roumania is no exception.

Living in the shadow between the idea and reality, the Roumanian

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woman doctor was neither right nor wrong in being what she was. She was just lucky.

4

But luck runs out; once upon a time, but still in our time and memory, it was also disclosed, by law of nature or divine decree, that nature herself exalted the principle of inequality, that nature herself chose as kings and rulers those who were fittest and strongest to survive the age-old struggle for existence. Thus the stronger rose and cast off the image of simple humanity and rejected the principle of inalienable rights; for simple humanity was the weaker and its rights were a perversion of nature's own mysterious laws according to which only the stronger should decide what is right and wrong and the weaker should serve and obey the stronger.

And it came to pass that this truth prevailed and that it was inscribed upon new tablets of right and wrong. Sometimes the weaker were the barbarians, sometimes the weaker were the infidels, sometimes the black men, sometimes the yellow men, sometimes the women, sometimes the Jews, sometimes the Poles or gypsies—sometimes simple humanity.

And the Roumanian woman doctor was wrong in being what she was; for it happened, once upon a time, but still in our time and memory, that the stronger prevailed and saw fit to persecute and exterminate the weaker of which she was one.

5

Thus it came to pass that the Roumanian woman doctor and her husband and her son and her parents were driven forth from the land they had lived in and from the home they had built and loved and sent onto the road of exile, naked and poor, on foot and in cattle cars. With the Roumanian woman doctor and her husband and her son and her parents—there were driven forth from the land of Egypt, from the plateau of Mexico, from the cities of Spain, from the steppes and forests of Asia and America, from the foothills of Ararat, from the waters of the Euphrates, Amazon, and Yangtze, from the jungles of Africa, and from the ghetto of Warsaw—all those who, from time immemorial, have always been driven from the land and homes, because they were weak, and the stronger prevailed according to the law of nature or divine decree.

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And they went into exile, naked and poor, on foot and in cattle cars, thousands first, then hundreds of thousands and millions, until their number swelled like a river in a big flood drowning men, women, and children, thousands first, then hundreds of thousands and millions, drowning the heart of humanity.

And now the Roumanian woman doctor was neither right nor wrong in being what she was; for she was only a victim. And that means she was nobody.

6

She survived. She lived to see her husband killed, her son killed, her parents killed—perhaps from exhaustion, perhaps from hunger, perhaps from asphyxiation in the cattle cars, perhaps lined up along a self-dug ditch and shot in the neck, perhaps hung, perhaps gassed, perhaps burned in a crematorium. But she survived; for it is also known, on highest authority, that an individual's life is valued according to the services he renders to those who employ him. An individual fetches a high price if he can render valuable service to those who have the power to determine what is valuable. Conversely, a person's life is worthless if it cannot be exchanged on the market place, if there is no one who will pay the price for keeping him alive.

Thus it came to pass, once upon a time, but still in our time and memory, that the aged, the sick, and the young were killed or let to die, for they needed to be fed and clothed and housed and they were unable to render services which would pay for the watery soup, the piece of mildewed bread, the rags, and the vermin-infested bunk.

But the Roumanian woman doctor could render useful services on the market place of the ghettoes and the dungeons of death. And she was right in being what she was; for it saved her life.

7

Since her skills were useful she survived. But she saved her life by working for those who had killed her husband, son, and parents. And in the name of what law, in the name of what God, did she save her life at the price of working for those who had killed her husband, son, and parents? Perhaps there is no answer; perhaps humanity needs no legal sanction to save its naked life; perhaps the Roumanian woman doctor was neither right nor wrong in doing what she did because saving one's life is beyond good or evil as recorded in the history of man.

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Or perhaps she remembered another kind of law according to which it is wrong to disobey duly constituted authorities. An act of civil disobedience violates the divine order in society, breaks the social contract, and threatens society with disintegration into chaos and anarchy.

It follows that the individual members of society—the workmen in the factories and fields, the merchants and craftsmen, the scientists and the doctors—render their services, but the authorities decide how and to what end to dispose of them. Thus it came to pass, once upon a time, but still in our time and memory, that the individual members of society became ever more highly accomplished in their skills and services: the technicians became ever more technically perfect, and the specialists ever more technically specialized until they could fashion gadgets not even dreamed of in the ages of barbarism and until they could practice the most subtle and difficult arts on the human body. But they had to surrender their ingenuity and artifacts to the duly constituted authorities. For theirs was not to be free to dispose of the things of their own making. Theirs was to render unto Caesar what was Caesar's.

Perhaps the Roumanian woman doctor remembered this ancient law and divine decree, and was right in serving those who had killed her husband, son, and parents; for she was only a specialist in the art of healing.

8

But, alas, between the idea and the reality falls a shadow. What was intended to serve the cause of health and life only served the cause of death.

The Roumanian woman doctor was alive only because she practiced an art which was useful to an economy of death. Workers and slaves—like tools and machines—must be oiled and greased, must be patched up and doctored in order to function with maximum efficiency and yield. Thus the doctor's art of healing only served the purpose of keeping human machines running at maximum speed in the factories of death. But a woman does not function well when she is with child. Like the aged, the young, or the sick, she becomes a burden, a liability to the economy of the ghettoes and dungeons, a mouth which needs extra feeding, a body which must be clothed and housed without being able to render any service for the privilege of being alive. Thus, according to the law of the market place, her life becomes worthless at the very moment when she fulfills her biological function of giving new life to the world of man.

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And the Roumanian woman doctor was wrong in being what she was; for the art of healing meant death for those who had conceived new life.

9

And the Roumanian woman doctor wrestled with her angel. Though an outcast in the dungeons of death, she was still a human being; and as a human being she wrestled with her angel as Jacob who was an outcast wrestled with his angel—to be forever blessed. Into the struggle she threw her sex, her profession, and life here and everlasting; for it was also known, once upon a time, but still in our time and memory, by law of nature and divine decree, that unborn life within the womb is sacrosanct.

The Roumanian woman doctor risked death and eternal damnation in performing her nocturnal abortions—not one or two or three, but hundreds and thousands. And the Roumanian woman doctor came to be hailed as a hero on behalf of "simple humanity" at the price of thousands of lives which might have been, but never were and never will be. And the Roumanian woman doctor was right in being what she was by committing this enormous wrong.

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Robert Richman

LOVE IS NOT LOVE IS

Unlike the New York cemeteries
Where each holds narrow dead
In dark apartments of neglected death—
O when the whole world tries
But is unloved still—the ill world
More ill now fouls all breath.
All know love is no New England village
Today. No, nor church white;
Nor Calvin-green the streets, the tidy groves
Where pure singing larks bite
At grosbeaks in the larch.
And the dark lawns have neglected the graves.

Unlike seventeen homes in Hadley
Where each holds narrow loves,
Love is more the sin within wanting out
To scheme other agonies,
Making habit of the sheets of love.
"Scared Knox," Johnathan shouts,
"Is in hell with God"; lonely echoes weep
As tears freeze in his eyes.
Love is more the red bats of hell he sees
Fly to the overwhelming sky.
Love's not the rains one counts
That lay the dust of fire the day love is.

Unlike those who kneel and fear, love
Unlocked my narrow eyes:

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A girl three in Massachusetts one noon
    Giving a hog a hug
With glee. With you my Emily
    Of the graves, I neglect home.
Yet love is Antigone in the cave her grave
    Saying, "no fear Haimon dear;
After the last stone and our last breath
    Make our tomb, there's only
    (Black and warm is our room!)
Sharing in your arms, the scarce air of death."

STONE FOOTING

Stopping my ears to Venus and her doves,
I steal stone footing, find death's carved decree;
I choose this path, the rock which no man loves
Familiar to birds, cast by a barren sea.
Cold on this ridge among the breeding winds,
Starved in the famine forced by Adam's rib,
Here I hold breath, knowing the door of my friends
Is rock, and I am exiled from their tribe.
I put my ear to the ground, I plant my foot
Against grey rock, but wind and seawave smother
The stone's coiled fossil-saga; this navel-knot
Fastens my moving to the great rock-mother.
I would unchain them; but there flies that other
Bearing the sea, and kills me with her shot.

Vernon Watkins

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Jean Stafford

THE BLEEDING HEART

Every morning and on alternate afternoons, Rose Fabrizio, a Mexican girl from the West, worked at a discreet girls' boarding school as secretary to the headmistress, a Miss Talmadge who had a sweet voice. It was sweet even when she was dictating a warm comeuppance to the laundry about its mistreatment of the school's counterpanes and bureau runners; and sweet when she was explaining the value of physical education to a recalcitrant pupil who declared that she loathed volleyball. Every day when she arrived shortly after Rose had unlocked the office and uncovered her typewriter, Miss Talmadge cried "Good morning" twice and then she said with a lilt, "How is our Westerner? Acclimated? Finding the charm of New England both within and without?" She then stepped briskly into her own office and made a great clatter with the files, rudely flung up the window no matter what the thermometer said and set to work like a whirlwind. At first Rose, who was twenty-one and uncommonly sensitive, bridled at this greeting which she believed to be subtly derisive, but now after two months, she knew that there was no feeling behind it at all; Miss Talmage inquired, in the same sweet rapid way, quite indifferent to the answers, about the parlormaid's fiancé and the French teacher's needlepoint and the riding master's brother's greenhouse. But even now, this reminder of her origin (vague as it must be in Miss Talmadge's mind, for if she imagined anything at all, she probably imagined cigar-store Indians and clumps of sage) sometimes brought on a subcutaneous prickle and distracted Rose from her shorthand so that on occasion she had fetched up with sentences that could not possibly be parsed.

Except in the vocal presence of Miss Talmadge, she *was* acclimated and she *did* find New England charming, although she was

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not quite sure that she had found it so both within and without, having no idea what the headmistress meant. She rejoiced in the abundance of imposing trees, in the pure style of the houses and the churches, in the venerable graveyards and in the unobtrusive shops. One was not conscious of any of the working parts of the town, not of the railroad nor of the filling stations nor of the water towers and the light-plants. Her own town, out West, had next to no trees and those were puny and half-bald and in no way modified all the way around. The main street there was a row of dirty doorways which led into the dirtier interiors of pool halls, drugstores where even the soda fountain bar had a flaccid look, and small restaurants and beer-parlors and hotels whose windows were decorated sometimes with sweet-potato vines growing out of jam cans painted red, and sometimes with a still-life of a prospector's pick-ax and some spurious gold ore, and sometimes with nothing more than the concupiscent but pessimistic legend that ladies were invited or that there were booths for them. The people here in this dignified New England town, shabby as they might be, wore hats and gloves at all hours and on all days and they appeared moral, self-controlled, well-bathed, and literate. The population of her own town was largely Mexican and was therefore, by turns, criminally quarrelsome or grossly stupefied so that when they were not beating one another up they stared into dusty space or lounged in various comatose attitudes against the stock properties of the main street: the telephone poles and fire hydrants and hitching posts. They were swarthy and they tended, on the whole, to be obese and to wear bright, juvenile colors. Repudiating all that, she greatly admired the pallor of the people here and their dun dress and their accent so that the merest soda-jerk sounded as if he had gone to Harvard.

In this atmosphere of good breeding and adulthood, Rose was happy half the time and altogether miserable the rest of it, miserable, that is, with envy of the people who had been born here of upright gentlefolk and had been reared in mannerly calm. And Rose, although she was full-grown and had a Bachelor of Arts degree (to be sure she had not gone to Radcliffe and her education had been a shabby, uninteresting affair) longed to be adopted. Sometimes this longing coupled with her loneliness—it was not to its detriment that the town was unfriendly but quite the contrary—fretted her so that

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she could neither read nor play Canfield and she sat idle and unhappy in her bed-sitting room where the wind came down the chimney like a failing voice and now and then caused the long-handled bed-warmer to stir on its hook, chiming against the bricks.

She had selected the very person she wished to become her foster-father, a man about sixty whom she saw on Tuesday and Thursday and Saturday afternoons in the town library, an incongruously modern building dedicated to the memory of Samuel Sewell. Here Rose read books on psychology in a western room where the sun came amply through the windows; in this room, besides herself, there always sat a thoughtful gentleman, wearing a lemon-yellow ascot and a sober dark blue suit. The ascot alone would have set him down as a person of prominence, for no one unimportant, she reasoned, could afford to be so boldly eccentric. She did not know what he read through the scholarly Oxford glasses which perfectly fitted on his stately nose and were anchored to his lapel by a black ribbon ending in a silver button. The books were big, she knew that much, and their bindings were a usual maroon. He did not take any notes (as she did voluminously, having been so recently graduated) and he read quite slowly. He did not move all afternoon save that at half past three he went outside and stood on the steps to smoke a cigarette; she could see him clearly through the window beside which she sat reading of Pavlov's submissive dog. Either he stood still, leaning against a half-pillar of the half-Ionic façade with his eyes closed and his lips moving a little, or he took a turn around the little triangular yard, holding his hatless white head at a dignified backward angle. Occasionally he paused under a tree and there, ankle deep in fallen leaves from the wine-glass elm, he was lost impressively in speculation. She thought he might be a mathematician or a novelist. Often when he returned, bringing with him a final remnant of the autumn air, he looked over at Rose across the tables and gave her an amiable, perfunctory nod as if he were her busy employer passing through the office of his underlings. Once he said something to her but in so low a voice and with so noncommittal an expression on his face that she did not understand and only smiled.

Despite her heritage of headlong impulse and her practice of setting forth before the signal was given, Rose made no move to further her acquaintance with the man and, indeed, she took pains

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never to see him out of his context. She always left the library before he did so that she would neither be tempted to find out what he was reading, since this would give a clue to his profession, nor to discover the direction he took to go home. Earlier in the fall, before she was aware that her library habits coincided with his and before she wanted to be adopted by him, she had enjoyed walking through the woods and over the hills and beside the river. On Sundays she had always gone to the largest and the oldest cemetery and there, upon a crest of rocks which overlooked the thin, ungarnished headstones, she had thoroughly read the literary supplement of the *New York Times* and had absently considered the hedge of barberry which flourished every which way beside a brook. She had liked to imagine the furnishings of the houses she could just see opposite and to wonder what scions of Mayflower families lived in them and were about to order tea. But now on Sunday, she stayed in her room, long as the day seemed, for it would in no way serve her purpose, she thought sensibly, to be caught spying on the library-man if he should come some time to pay his respects to someone's bones, those of his wife, perhaps, or a beloved daughter dead in early womanhood.

And before this, she had gone to dinner once or twice a week to an inn a mile out of the town on a byroad. This inn had the mark of Henry Ford upon it and so had the diners who disputed facts involved in the American Revolution and who exclaimed over the hasty-pudding. The landlord, a lethargic gentleman from Bangor, sat in a chimney corner smoking an authentic pipe and the cook was said to be descended from King Philip on the maternal side. Rose did not think it probable that the man in the yellow ascot would ever come to a place like this since the atmosphere of his own dining room would be, if anything, even more bona fide. But she did not wish to run any risk, for, just as she did not want to know what books he read (he might be proved by them to be in his second childhood) and did not want to see him laying flowers upon his daughter's grave (for it might not be a daughter at all but only some old aunt by marriage) so she did not want to see him eating lest she discover that he followed an idiosyncratic diet and therefore had a constitutional disease.

All this abstention and the restiveness which accompanied it made her days and evenings monotonous and she became very

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much aware of the drawbacks of her room which until now she had found—at least by comparison with the room at home which she shared with two younger sisters both of whom walked in their sleep and one of whom gnashed her teeth—ideal. She lived on the ground floor of a double house which stood on a corner and was shaped like a wedge so that the front doors were on different streets. Her room, at Number 8 Patriot Road, was flush with what she thought must be the parlor at Number 6 Faneuil Lane and through the wood and plaster she sometimes heard throttled voices, heavy footsteps, and the indignant squawk of a mistuned radio. But she never heard a sound in Number 8. She was the only lodger on the first floor, but upstairs there were several meek and apparitional figures whom she met in the mildewed hall as she went to and from the bathroom. The landlady lived across the entry-way from Rose and was visible only on Wednesday evening when she came to collect the rent and present the clean towels. Generally this transaction was performed as a dumb show and without smiles. The telephone seldom rang and the doorbell never. Besides this rather sepulchral air, the house was chilly and the lamps in Rose's room were poor.

Her feeling toward the silence of Number 8 and the sounds, low and distorted as they were, of Number 6, passed through several stages between the middle of October and the Thanksgiving holiday. At first the quiet of her own house pleased her because she could read with such concentration and the noises of 6 irritated her when they were loud enough to intrude upon her page, yet not quite loud enough to be properly identified. Then, she was disturbed and next annoyed by the silence and felt that it was unnatural, while she was grateful for the indications through the wall that there was life just yonder. And, again, she would be strained and unsettled, waiting for the noises and unable to make use of the interstices of silence between them. She never saw the tenants of the other house, but she had an idea what sort they might be, for frequently there was an electric car in front, looking like a large, abandoned toy. The driver of it, she was certain, would be a brisk old lady with no nonsense about her and she came to believe, groundlessly, that there were two such old ladies, sisters, perhaps, or friends since boarding school days at Lausanne. One must be either rather fat or else somewhat lame and wear special shoes, for nothing else could account for the heavy tread

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Rose sometimes heard. Once, on a Sunday afternoon, out of a clear blue sky she wondered if the man in the yellow ascot ever called at Number 6 and she snubbed the thought, snubbed the peculiarly awful possibility that he might be there at this very moment.

On Thanksgiving Day, she went to the inn outside the town for midday dinner. The library-man was there and the moment she saw him, dressed as usual, she knew that she had secretly expected him, for she was not at all surprised. He was sitting at a table near the fireplace engaged in conversation with the landlord and simultaneously reading the menu. A bright fire burned in the hearth and his fresh skin shone in the light like a leaf turned golden and it appeared to have a leaf's smooth texture. He sat very straight in his chair and while he waited for the soup, he closed his eyes and calmly smiled as he listened to the landlord who was apparently telling a long joke. He looked as if he might be sitting for his portrait and, indeed, he would have been a distinguished subject for a painter who did accurate "likenesses" of college presidents and notable physicians, for his face had those admirable qualities of mellowness and deep, pacific wisdom and irony and casualness. He was in no hurry. He waited for his dinner with his eyes closed, not having to be occupied with looking round the room at the other diners and at the Currier and Ives prints on the walls and all the antique furniture which one might buy if one were able. Rose's own young and impatient mind immediately pranced away from him and dwelt, in quick succession, upon the brindle cat who was balancing for no earthly reason on the newel post; upon the lemon tree in the bay window, fed like an animal to produce fruit of a dreadful size; two quiet brown-eyed children who sat silent at a table with two thin old women, holding their hands between courses in an attitude of prayer. Fleetly it struck her that these two might be her neighbors and at that very moment, as if she had been directed by a voice, she looked out the window at the far driveway and saw the electric car, its square top grizzled with frost. It must be that the children were with their aged great-aunts for the day and she thought it must be a doubtful pleasure to them all since the four mute mouths bore an illegible expression.

Rose did not look at her foster-father save when her eyes fell on him by accident. Once she caught him looking at her over a piled fork and in his surprise, he let some of the stuffing fall off. Every

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inch of her skin felt roasted and her hands shook so that for a moment she dared not try to lift her water glass although her mouth was dry. And later when his salad came, she looked again and he distinctly winked at her as he tossed the cloves of tomato and the water cress. It was not a plainspoken wink at all and it made her nervous. She hurried through her meal in order that she might leave before he did because, besides the ambiguous gambit of his eye, she was inadmissably afraid that *he,* not the old ladies, might enter the electric car. She grappled hard with her suspicions about him and imperatively pointed out to herself that this stately aristocrat lived in a handsome house and that he had naturally given his housekeeper and his cook the day off and because the air was fine and sharp, had liked to walk a mile to his dinner. She could not help feeling that it was strange he had not been invited anywhere, for surely a man of his position, whatever it was, would have friends in the town. Perhaps he despised the sentimental fanfare of holidays. Next year, after his adoption of her was a legal fact, she imagined that on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter they would dine alone and afterward would play backgammon. Yet already she was visited with a nettlesome problem: should she play badly so that he would have the pleasure of winning or cleverly so that he would praise her? She rather hoped that he did not have a violin or any whimsical hobbies like collecting Revolutionary artifacts or going for bird-walks.

Rose did not wait for her dessert and on her way out she glanced quickly at the coats hung on the pegs in the hall. She recognized his immediately; it was black with a beaver lining and although it was quite worn, it still was very rich and serviceable. His derby was there too and a tartan muffler. Fearing the road along which, at any moment, the electric car might pass, she struck into the woods and walked home along the pale, thick river. She found a nickel and a fresh-water mussel shell and she came upon a beached canoe, withering in the dry fall. She passed behind the girls' school and glanced at the windows of the dormitory with their starched dimity curtains. The little girls had all gone home to their fathers for the holiday. She was very lonely here beside the river and she began to walk fast, counting her footsteps to forestall her melancholy, but then she slowed down again as she realized that she would be just as lonely in her room. Until now she had been content with seeing

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the man in the library and had even been a little proud in a queer way that he had a life quite secret, quite independent of the alternate afternoons in the reading room and that what she did at other times was equally unimaginable to him. But now beside the woeful river, she was almost frightened to think of him just as she had almost been frightened as a child when everyone had left the church after the last Mass and she had wondered what happened then, whether the plaster saints came to life and if God emerged, full-bodied, from the wafers in the ciborium.

Rose did not know, until she was actually within her room again, shadowy with dusk and musty with the old upholstery of the buckling wicker chairs, that there had been another reason why she had not liked to come back: now she was face to face with the knowledge that she had seen the driver of the electric car who was, therefore, one of the authors of the noises in the other house. The car had got there before she did. The very moment she stepped across her threshold onto the distempered carpet with its muddy oak leaves, the sounds came, feebly ill-natured, straight to her anticipating ears. There were no new sounds, no children's voices.

All that afternoon, while she was thinking of the man as he sat in his own library (the Samuel Sewell was closed today) in one of the white clapboard houses in the side streets of the town, the dulled hubbub went on beyond the wall. At first she paid little heed; she was thinking of the chintz wing chair he might be sitting in with his feet on a brass fender before a fire. And at first the sounds were unobtrusive. But toward dark, they became more insistent and she grew fully conscious of them. Although she could not hear words nor could she tell what sort of movements were being made, she was entirely alert, straining to read this trifling mystery. After a little, she was able to separate some of the noises and she heard a door open and close and a telephone ring and a clock strike and outside, in the street, she heard a boy irrelevantly cry, "Richard?" and she heard something bump over an uncarpeted floor. But above—or rather beneath, for it was little more than a jerky hum—the other sounds, there was a voice complaining, directly on the other side of the wall; it was a venomous and senile whimper which went on and on. It seemed to be uttering short curses with just time for a breath in between the tenth, perhaps, and the eleventh. Presently

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there was another opening and closing of the door and a second voice, a man's voice, spoke. There was, as well, a rattle of metal and now Rose constructed a picture: someone was ill and someone else was bringing a tray to the sick-bed. But the important fact was that she must revise her general notion of the household: it included a man. Yet why could it not be a doctor, summoned hastily because one of the old ladies had eaten unwisely at the inn? She regretted that she had not scrutinized her neighbors more closely to see if they bore any marks of frailty in the color of the skin or the look about the nose. She sighed and went to the window to pull down the shade for it had grown dark, and once again the electric car served her, for here it came, a silent, absurd box, round the corner and on its way toward the Mill Dam. "They have gone for the prescription," she said happily, and she saw a peaked spinster lying in a bed, another peaked one operating the simple machinery of the car. And she assured herself that the driver must, indeed must be one of the children's great-aunts for no man in his right mind would be seen in such a thing in this day and age.

When she had pulled the bottle-green blinds and turned on her two lamps, no brighter than candle flames, she was momentarily disgusted with herself for spending so much time conjecturing on unseen and unknown people. She was as bad as her mother who could search a whole evening through for the inner meanings of a neighbor's greeting when they had not been on speaking terms for weeks or the impertinence of a salesgirl in the five and ten. So she tried to forget about the other house and to go back to the man in the yellow ascot but he was suddenly gone altogether and instead of him she could only see her real father, Joseph Fabrizio, who would be having a holiday today like everyone else and who, stupid and cynical, would be shambling about the house out West where even the hopvines at the windows were limp and unclean. Her father wore a black coat-sweater from J. C. Penney's and a spotty gray cap and Army store pants and miner's shoes studded with cleats that tore up the linoleum and made a brash racket. The putrefied smell of sugar beets clung to him constantly even after a bath which he took only once in a month of Sundays. She did not know one good thing about her father except that when she was very small she had been delighted to hear him sing "Juanita" and "Valencia" in a tenor voice

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for which he was admired by two or three people in the town; and one time when he must have been as drunk as a monkey, he brought her a box of Cheese-bits and a copy of *Sweetheart Stories* when she had the pinkeye. Although as far back as she could remember, she had been driven to get away, far away and never go home again, she was often resentful that he never wrote to her and that he had not been at all sorry or at all possessive when she had gone away. As a matter of fact, he had not even seen her off on the bus and her mother did not know where he was. Her mother said, looking vaguely up and down the street and nodding to several acquaintances, "Well, I'll tell him goodbye for you," and handed her a lunch in a Honey Kist bread wrapper. The simple and humiliating fact was that he cared so little that he had clean forgotten.

The memories of her father, each one of which was uglier than the one before, made her so cross and jumpy that she knew she must quiet herself and she sat down to read *Self Reliance* which she had always found very soothing because it was so sedately dull. But she could pay attention to it even less than usual and the pattern of sounds next door presently was repeated: the telephone, the opening and closing of the door, the sound of china and silver on a tray. She was irritated and when she returned to Emerson, exhorting him to lull her, the voice would give her no peace but went on in its protracted peeve, hovering like a gnat over every word on the page. Finally she grew really angry and she knocked sharply on the wall. There was an immediate silence and then a most terrible and much louder sound: it was a laugh! And such a laugh as she had never heard in her life for it was as thin as a needle and unlike the speech, it did not quaver. For a moment she was afraid and she stepped away as if there were real danger, and then she was even angrier than before and her thoughts went quickly down this ladder of unreason, "If my father had not been a low person and if he had loved me, I would not have grown up in poverty and I would not have hated him so much that I had to go away from home to the first job that came along, this mean one that pays so little that I must live in a dark, depressing room where the walls are so thin that the sound of sickness comes through and for no reason at all I am laughed at by a cruel person who does not even know me." And she envisaged her father as he had probably been that day she had boarded the orange bus; fat and

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foul-tongued he would have been shooting Cowboy at the pool hall where they had spittoons since most of the patrons, including (God damn him) her father, chewed tobacco.

It was no longer possible for Rose to stay in her room in the evenings because of the busy personalities so near, and after dinner she went back to the Samuel Sewell. The overhead light was poor and made her eyes smart and she missed not sitting in her wrapper and her slippers. She was impatient with the spinster's prolonged illness and she saw no reason why she was not taken to the hospital. Sometimes they went on for years that way, just clinging to the ragged edge of nothing, getting more and more querulous and bothersome. Miss Talmadge noticed that Rose was distraught and when she asked and Rose said that she was dissatisfied with her room, Miss Talmadge objected with vehement sweetness, "But it is a quaint room! It is a lovely, lovely, lovely room!" and began instantly to dictate a stunning letter to the parent of a pupil who, in a tantrum over nothing at all, had deliberately broken a hockey stick belonging to the school.

One morning just before the Christmas holiday, Miss Talmadge asked her, in her pink voice, if she would run an errand for her in the afternoon. The girls of the fourth form wished to send a potted plant to someone who was ill, a former matron. Rose was not surprised at all when she heard that the address was Number 6 Fanueil Lane. So important was this illness with which she lived that it did not occur to her that there was another invalid in the town and Miss Talmadge, never dreaming that the retired matron was the reason she did not like her room, said, with pointless cheer, "It will be so handy for you."

She accepted the commission with the greatest reluctance, not only because she wanted the occupants of the other house to remain anonymous but because, as well, she had a horror of being near old people and she remembered a time when the fifth grade had gone to sing Christmas carols at the old people's home. There had been a smell of senility in the long room with its glaring linoleum and Mission benches where the old people sat fiddling with their neckties or with pieces of holly purloined from the dining room decorations. The last song was "We Three Kings" and by this time Rose was so sick

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that she only moved her lips, not making any sound. When it was over and they stood for a moment, dumb and immobile, until the teacher came to herd them away, a terribly, terribly old man rose to his feet and cried, "Damned brats! Clear them damned brats out p.d.q." He had bicycle clips on his eleemosynary plus-fours.

She had never actually passed the other house and she was surprised to find that its façade was altogether different from that of Number 8 Patriot Road. The paint was a darker shade of red and instead of two bay windows it had only one, just to the right of the off-center door. In the windows at Number 8, the landlady kept ferns and cactuses but there was nothing at all alive in those of Number 6 and there were no curtains. There was only a solitary tuberculosis seal from the year before pasted in the lowest middle pane. Instead of a neat brass letter-slot, there was a raveling raffia basket which hung on a hammock-hook to hold the mail and there was no knocker but a bell instead, the kind you rang by turning an embossed iron handle. She turned it and heard a tinkle and instantly a voice very near her cried thinly, "Just a minute!" Rose could not tell where it came from but she waited in discomfort, feeling that she was being looked at from some vantage point no more than a foot away. Still, no one came. It was snowing and the big soft flakes dissolved in beautiful splashes on the glazed green paper that wrapped the bleeding-heart. She rang again, and again, immediately, the voice encouragingly said, "Just a minute!" It was a high and genderless voice and was, she thought, the same one that had laughed at her when she had knocked on the wall. She was despondent here in the twilight snowstorm and her fingers clutching the pot were growing numb. The voice broke its promise for the second time; several minutes passed and nothing happened. She would try once more and if still no one came, she would leave the plant on the doorstep even though it might freeze. Each moment she hated her role more, no matter what its outcome was to be. It would be worse than ever now to hear the sounds through the wall if she had the misfortune actually to see the interior of the house (how dreadful if she had to go into the sickroom iself!) and it would be almost as bad if the door was never opened and whoever it was that bade her wait a minute saw her leave and enter Number 8. Her comings and goings would thereafter be observed; or, even if they weren't, she

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would think they were and now, besides the sounds, she would be rattled by hypothetical eyes spying upon her.

She was about to ring for the last time when out of the corner of her eye, she saw the electric car coming cautiously down the gentle slope of the street. Now there was no escaping. The great-aunt driving the car and the bodiless procrastinator behind the door would catch her there with the bleeding-heart and make her explain herself. "Just a minute!" The voice, speaking this time of its own accord and not in answer to the bell, startled her and the plant slipped in her hands. The car disappeared in a driveway behind the house and in a little while a distant door opened and closed and Rose firmly rang the bell. This time the voice laughed mockingly up and down an untrue scale and she was in no doubt at all that it was the same one that had sneered at her knock.

The mysterious house behind the black door was seized with spasms. Someone screamed, "Tea!" and a stove was madly shaken down. Heavy footsteps crossed a room and a man's voice, roared, "What? What do you say?" "Tea! Toast!" the screamed reply rang clear and the "s" in the toast was prolonged with hatred. "Give a person a chance to turn around, Mother!" said the man and the laughing voice near Rose chuckled high in its throat and mimicked itself, "Just a minute!" and then mimicked the deep voice of the man, "Just a minute!" She would have set the present down and run for dear life, but she was too late for a light came dimly on in the front hall and feet approached the door.

"Well!" said the man in the yellow ascot with the same comforting smile he gave her in the library when he came in from smoking. He held the door wide open so that she saw a tall spooky staircase and a room to the right where chairs were arranged in a circle as if for a funeral or a clergyman's tea. Rose took a step forward and held out the bleeding-heart to him, unable to say a word.

"Well!" he said again. "What's this? A posy for my poor sick mother?" He, for his part, was not in the least discomfited by this meeting. It was clear that he recognized her but he was not surprised; it was almost as if he had expected her all along. Now that she was up close, she saw that the ascot was made of diapered foulard but she saw, as well, that it was not clean and had the uncleanliness that accumulates over a period of weeks. She wondered if it hid something

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repulsive like a goiter or a birthmark or if it were some sort of fascist insignia and he was cat's-paw to a band of crooks.

"Yes," she said, as bashful as a child. "It is a plant from the school."

From the left came the scream again, beside itself with rage, "Tea! Toast! Me!" The man, as if to himself, said, "Bring my tea and toast to me," and then smiling and looking directly at Rose with active brown eyes, he explained, "My mother has lost her verbs and adjectives. In fact, she has lost all parts of speech except her nouns and pronouns, a very interesting phenomenon. Come in, please," and he put his hand under her elbow with gallant pressure. There was nothing she could do and she stepped inside the vestibule which had a sweet smell like the taste of Neccos.

"Where shall I put it?" Rose asked.

"Oh, we'll take it right in to Mother, don't you think? What kind is it? A geranium, I hope."

"A bleeding-heart."

"Oh," he said scowling. "Well, we'll have to make the best of it." He tucked her arm in his and bent down toward her. "She likes either geraniums or cut flowers. She has forgotten the names of all the others."

Now that she was so close to him she discovered that it was he who smelled of Neccos and that actually the hall smelled of ordure. There was a rustling like that of stiff silk and the man said, "Excuse me just a minute," and right beside them but still invisible the voice malevolently aped him. He shut the door and there she saw a parrot in a cage on a marble-topped bureau. It regarded her with wicked eyes like a patient maniac.

"I'll bet Waldo here has you buffaloed, didn't he?" said the man with a laugh as he opened the cage and the parrot stepped out on to his wrist with a haughty mutter. "He's a great old bird."

"Hours!" shrieked the voice of the invalid and the man translated for the smug bird, "You have been gone for hours."

Rose, while she could not claim to be really surprised herself, could not adjust herself to the man's unhesitating acceptance of the situation as if they had planned it together some days before. He indicated that she was to precede him down the corridor as if this were the most natural thing in the world, and they went, all three

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of them, down the slightly veering hall where ghostly pictures hung and on the way the man said, like a guide, "As you see, we live very simply, Mother and I. The room to your right is the parlor which we seldom use in winter. Perhaps you observed the portrait on the far wall of that room? An illustrious ancestor. Upstairs there are four bedrooms besides yours truly's. Linen closet, of course, and ample attic space." They paused at a door and he said, secretly as if the parrot were eavesdropping, "I have seen you in the library, you know. Rose." He said her name in a way that the greenest schoolgirl could not have misconstrued and she trembled from head to foot and had to grasp the plant tightly or it would have fallen. His breathing was a little heavy and the parrot, eyeing Rose in the twilight of the hall, gave forth a glottal giggle full of wisdom.

All the low furniture in the invalid woman's room was painted white except for the narrow bed which was blackish-brown and looked like a catafalque. The bones of the flagging body on it jutted up under a royal purple counterpane. At first only the head and shoulders of the ancient woman showed, but when the small red eyes, witlessly mean with age, saw the parrot, she drew forth a huge piebald hand and her tongue labored on her lip as she said, "Him me."

"Quite like a child," said her son tolerantly as he handed over the parrot which settled down on her wrist. "The young lady here, Miss Rose, has brought you a plant, Mother. She says it's from the school."

The old woman's fingernails were painted a morbid red and one of the fingers stroked the parrot's stout yellow talons. Although the woman did not look at her, she said, "Roses. Gratitude."

"No, Mother, not roses. I said this young lady's name was Miss Rose. She has brought a bleeding-heart." He added in an exasperated aside, "Not that it matters a hoot in hell what kind of any old thing it is."

The invalid covered Rose with an ambiguous glance and said, "I her."

"I her," repeated her son. "I don't know what she means." He began to take the paper off the plant and growled, "I surely hope she likes it. She surely should. Very thoughtful of the school to my way of thinking."

"I her," repeated the old woman in a louder voice and the man

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flushed. Obviously this could signify anything; "I hate her," "I want her to go," or "I have never seen her before." It was a cul-de-sac that could not very well be ignored because she said it over and over and presently Waldo joined with his one sentence and they chanted antiphonally, "I her," "Just a minute," "I her," "Just a minute." While these two obscene creatures on the bed were making a spectacle of themselves, the man was clumsily trying to get the string off the flower-pot and nudging Rose every now and again although he did not need to. There was an awful odor in the room, both medicinal and decayed, and everything looked soiled and moist. The shape of the room and the situation of the furniture were the same as hers as if in a planned parody.

The man got the knot untied and slipped the paper off and his mother said to the parrot, "Silence," and to her son, "I her bell."

"Of course!" cried the man with relief. "I heard her ring the bell?" And the woman nodded her head up and down with a delighted smile on the thin crescent of her mouth.

He put the bleeding-heart on the low white table beside the bed where a Bible lay, conventional and new, and some sticky bottles of medicine and some revolting gobbets of cotton. The other old hand with veins as thick as pencils came staggering out of the bed to pluck a blossom from the plant which it held out for the parrot. The fingernails were the same color as the little flower which disappeared in Waldo's greedy bill.

"Roses. Waldo."

"Yes, Mother," said the man soothingly, "Roses for Waldo." On the wall over the bed hung a sampler which said, "LOOK UPWARD NOT DOWN."

Rose finally found her voice and she said urgently, "I must go." But the man detained her with a soft pat on her arm. "But you haven't had your tea. You must have tea with Mother." Mother was plucking the flowers and feeding them to Waldo very rapidly for one of her years and debility. After each gobble, Waldo ducked his head in a sort of villainous coquetry.

"I'm sorry," said Rose, "but I really must go."

He was looking with some consternation at his mother. "I say, you don't think a bleeding-heart is toxic, do you? I wouldn't like anything to happen to Waldo."

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"I don't know," she said miserably, and to the woman on the bed she said, "Goodbye. I am glad to have met you," although this was a double lie for she was not glad and there had been no proper meeting.

"Oh, you must have tea!" cried the man and he fingered his yellow ascot nervously as if he could not bear to have her leave. "You must! It isn't often that Mother and I have such a pretty guest." She shivered and buttoned the top button of her coat. "It will only take a minute," he wheedled. "It's on the tray and I just plug in the electric kettle thing and we're all set." He gave himself a private smile and said, "All set and rarin' to go."

She was about to be very firm and cutting if necessary to this tiresome old child by whom she had been so foolishly taken in in the library, but she thought of Miss Talmadge and was afraid if she were discourteous there might be trouble. It could not last long and he could not do anything improper to her in front of his mother and the parrot whose sagacious gaze missed nothing. So she gave in and he drew a rocking chair to the center of the room and beside it he put a bench. "The tray goes here," he said, "and you can pour." And then he left the room, walking out backwards to unnerve her all the more.

The ten minutes he was gone were for Rose a bizarre and separate experience. The old woman and the parrot clucked at one another over the sinister meal of bleeding-hearts and but for this there was silence in the darkening room. She was forced to accept the reality of the afternoon, that the man in the yellow ascot lived here and that he drove the electric car and that in no particular did he resemble the image of her foster-father. And it was quite possible to accept it now, but she was apprehensive of the evening to come and the next afternoon when she would meet him again in the Samuel Sewell. There were only two flowers left on the plant and for some reason she hoped that tea would be here before they were gone. She glanced toward the bed; the headboard was just opposite her desk and she knew that she could never again write there with the picture in her mind of the old woman feeding the evil bird. A good deal in her quiet life would be changed. She doubted if she would ever go again to the library on the customary afternoons, for example. She would be free, it is true, to walk once again in the parts of the town

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and the country she had enjoyed before but this gain was offset by the knowledge that there was no mystery left: she knew exactly where the man lived and, moreover, to her regret, she knew *how* he lived.

The next to the last blossom was gone and then the last was gone and the feeding hand retired under the covers. The old woman looked at Waldo and at Rose and said, "You him." She pretended neither to hear nor to see but stared at the sampler which had a border of pine-cones. A foot surreptitiously moved under the counterpane and Waldo walked off his mistress's hand so that Rose, nauseated, saw that he had not eaten the bleeding-hearts at all, but had only mauled them and then had dropped them onto the bed where they lay in a heap like bloody matter. The command was repeated but she heard her host coming back and she got up to open the door for him. She said, "I think your mother wanted me to take the parrot."

"Oh, did she?" he asked with interest. "That shows she likes you. Yes, sir, that shows you've made a big hit with Mother."

"But I don't like birds," she said.

"Really? How extraordinary! I had a very charming Brazilian oriole to whom I was much attached. Waldo killed her, I never was just sure how."

On the tray were a plate of English muffins and a jar of peanut butter and one of marmalade and a store-bought pound cake and a dish of pickled peaches. There were a can of evaporated milk and a tin of bouillon cubes. This last he picked up, mouthing the words, "This is what she thinks is tea. Isn't allowed tea. A stimulant." Waldo laughed.

It took a long time to prepare the meal. A good deal of furniture had to be moved before the kettle could be plugged in; then he had to go back to the kitchen for spoons which he had forgotten and then for some plates for the pickled peaches. Then he stopped everything when he saw the mess Waldo had made with the flowers and for a moment Rose thought he was going to lose this temper. "Pest!" he said sharply and gave Waldo a baleful look. When everything was ready, the old woman said "Radio" so the lamp had to be unplugged and the radio plugged in and candles had to be lit. The kettle made the radio splutter and creak and Waldo, the ever-

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lasting Mr. Fixit, stared at the box and said patiently, "Just a minute." But at last everything was ready and Rose began to pour the tea while the man spread peanut butter on the English muffins. The old woman sucked the bouillon and gave a sip to Waldo now and then.

"I wish she wouldn't do that," said the man, preoccupied with the muffins. "It gives him an intestinal condition."

Rose said politely, "How old is Waldo?"

"Forty-eight," he said. "Quite a character. He used to say some other things. 'I think you're rather foolish,' was one and 'Go bye-bye, Aunt Louisa' was another, but he's lost everything but 'Just a minute'."

"It is remarkable," said Rose, referring to the habit in this household of mislaying language.

"Yes," he mused, giving her a muffin in his hand. "Yes, Waldo's quite a character. He keeps Mother company. If it weren't for Waldo, I'd never get to have my little afternoons off at the library."

Because there was something in his voice that was not altogether trustworthy, she said, "What does he eat?"

"A special food for parrots," he said. "Called 'Polly's Perfect Preparation.' But he likes fruit too. The trouble with fruit, though, is that it gives him that intestinal condition I alluded to."

Mother finished her bouillon with a hoarse swallow and said, "Time toast."

"Right you are, Mother. Time for toast," and handed her a muffin with marmalade. Returning, he said *sotto voce,* "Time for toast and tea for two, what? Do you often eat at the inn?"

"Oh, no, almost never. Do you?"

No. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Patriots' Day, that's all. Not that the cuisine is not to my liking. But I am rather tied here to my poor sick mother. That is to say, I generally dine *en famille."* A note of woe came into his voice: *"En famille* with Waldo."

She could not think of any comment to make on this very sad state of affairs and so she said, "What delicious peanut butter." In point of fact, it was dry and tasteless and the muffin was cold and rubbery. As for the tea, *it* could not be described. She promised herself that she would eat the whole muffin and drink the whole cup of tea and then she would go even if it meant being rude.

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"*Is* it delicious peanut butter? Oh, thank you," he said joyfully and from the bed the old woman clamored, "Gratitude!"

The man asked her how she liked Miss Talmadge and if she were ever homesick for the West and if she did not find her room at Number 8 rather chilly when the wind came off the river. He said he imagined she found the fare at the Minute Man café pretty much the same old thing from day to day; swordfish, canned peas, boiled potatoes. It was a little cold for sitting in the cemetery on Sunday afternoon nowadays, wasn't it?

"Lonesome, aren't you, little lady?" he said and Waldo warned from the footboard of the bed, "Just a minute."

She drank the last of the sour tea and returned the cup to the tray. She drew on her gloves and stood up. "Thank you so much for the tea," she said, "it was most kind of you."

The old woman beckoned to her and said, "Time."

"Yes, I know. It's time for me to go." She tried to smile warmly.

"No, no," cried her son anxiously, "she means there's plenty of time."

But she would not be detained any longer and she moved toward the door. He was immediately beside her, following her down the hall as long and as dark as a tunnel. Halfway down Waldo came bustling after them and walked between them, laughing busily. The man held Rose's elbow tightly as if by the pressure of his fingers he could communicate the desperate state of his loneliness. "You can't imagine how awful it is," he confided urgently. "Today you only saw her company manners, but you should hear the things she says to me when we're alone." His voice was full of tears. "Rose! Rose, we're near neighbors. Strictly speaking we live in the same house, Rose. Won't you come again?"

"I'll try," she said without any pity at all.

"When?"

"I don't know."

"Tomorrow? Oh, no, tomorrow we meet in the library, don't we? What do you read there?"

She was remote and academic. "I am doing some research work."

"That's wonderful. I knew you were cultured. I went to Harvard. I dare say you've heard of that little old college down Cambridge way?"

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He was such a terrible mixture of unattractive qualities that she did not know how his face managed, throughout the manifestation of each new symptom, to remain aristocratically handsome. They were at the door now and she put her hand out toward the knob, but he was ahead of her. "Permit me, Rose," he said. "Please greet Miss Talmadge for my mother and me, but don't tell her what happened to the bleeding-heart." He grasped her hand in both of his and squeezed it warmly and looking deep into her eyes, he whispered, "The Samuel Sewell tomorrow."

She ran down the steps and he called after her, "Rose! My name is Mr. Benson!"

She heard him close the door and at the corner she paused in the snowfall, senseless with misery. She could *not* sleep another night in that room but she had nowhere to go. Tears for her homeless self went down her cheeks with the snowflakes and she let a little sound escape her, the murmur of an unhappy child. And then, because there was nothing else to do, she opened the front door of Number 8 and went into her room. She turned the radio on very loud and got a program of jazz played on an organ and deafened to any other possible sound, she began to play solitaire, violently slapping the cards down on the table. In this futile tantrum with the cards, she bent a corner of the Queen of Hearts and this reminded her of her father's custom of spending whole winter evenings cleaning a deck of cards with a jackknife. A jackknife which he used, as well, to slice off a plug of chewing tobacco, to trim his fingernails and, in the spring, to dig embedded woodticks out of his skin.

When she came back from her dinner of swordfish at the Minute Man, she found a note on the rug just inside the door which said:

My dear Rose,

If you would care to go to the picture show tonight in Acton, I am at your disposal and wish you would telephone me. My name is in the book. I could come to your door or you could come to mine. Mrs. Morton Ripley is coming to call on Mother. I do not know when another opportunity will offer so hope you will not refuse.

Awaiting your communication via telephone,

I am,
Lucius Benson

There was no sound from the room beyond the wall but the silence was an uneasy one and she shuddered thinking of what might be

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going on in there. Waldo and his mistress were capable of any sort of monstrous tableau if the demonstration this afternoon with the bleeding-heart had not been unusual. She thought of going to the priest to ask for his advice or to the policeman for his protection. In any case, she could not stay here and after a minute of debate she let herself out quietly and went down the street and into the Mill Dam on her way to the library. But she had only just got to the triangular square of lawn in front of it when the electric car eased up alongside her and Mr. Benson leaned across and opened the door.

"Here, here," he gaily cried. "This is no way to treat your Dutch uncle. Climb in! Hop right in, Rosie O'Grady, and off we'll go to the picture show."

"Mr Benson," she began, giving his derby a hard look, "I can't go to the movies with you tonight."

"Nonsense," he said. "Stuff and nonsense. Hop in, dear, we'll be in time for the newsreel. Good gracious, Rosie, what are you afraid of? Do you mean to say that you're afraid of a harmless old codger, old enough to be your father?"

"No, Mr. Benson," she said, "I'm not afraid of you." And it was true, she was not afraid, she was only displeased. "But I won't go to the movies."

"Just think of me as your father," he said. "Why don't you call me that as a matter of fact? I mean, not 'Father' but one of the more familiar things like 'Daddy'?"

It was not at all likely, she thought, that this was taking place. It was much too improbable that she was talking under an arc lamp in a snowfall to an elderly roué in an electric car who had invited her to call him Daddy.

"If you won't come with me," he said rather testily, "then I will come into the library and read."

She was at the end of her tether. No longer scared, certainly not respectful of his age, no longer polite for Miss Talmadge's sake, she burst out, "Oh, go to grass," and she scuffled up the snowy path.

"Let me tell you about my Brazilian oriole," he called desperately through the quiet storm. "Waldo killed it out of pure spite! I preferred it to Waldo and Waldo killed it out of spite!"

Rose went on up the path.

"Rose!"

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She heard him come running after her but she was not afraid, for the library was brightly lighted. She stopped when he was abreast of her and stamped her foot. "Go away, Mr. Benson," she said.

His head fell forward dejectedly and his beaver-lined coat which was not buttoned hung loosely on him as if he had suddenly shriveled. He was a die-hard. "Oh, Rose," he said, "I assure you I mean no harm." He touched the yellow ascot with the palm of his hand and said, "The most unsightly wen you ever saw. All I am asking is a little pity." He began to undo the scarf as she mounted the steps. When she was within the storm doors, she looked back and saw him standing there in the snow with his neck bare and his arms spread out, his palms upward in supplication. He had flung his head back and his derby had fallen to the ground; he wore the yellow ascot on his left arm like a maniple. Just behind him, the electric car cast an absolutely square shadow on the white ground.

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Bernard Wall

QUESTIONS OF LANGUAGE

And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion.
T. S. Eliot, *East Coker.*

The problem of language as a vehicle for poetic and literary expression has arisen with peculiar force in our time. Doubtless language has always involved difficulties of choice and selection whether these were overcome unconsciously by instinctive taste, or this instinctive taste was reasoned about in the way pursued by Dante in his *De Vulgari eloquentia.* But difficulties like those of Dante have only a partial resemblance—and perhaps one which is largely misleading—with the self-conscious hesitations and the intellectual problems which have arisen with us. One is tempted to say that Homer and Shakespeare or other vast figures who made or enriched languages were born in ages in which the anonymous work of the people, or a fortunate association of circumstances, provided the epic poet or the dramatist with a strong and ready-made vehicle for his expression: that people in the heroic age of Greece talked like Homer and the Elizabethan English talked like Shakespeare. So that whereas a modern poet—says Mr. T. S. Eliot—cannot write as he talks, in the current idiom of his time, but instead needs to develop, with much searching of intellect and feeling, another kind of language which tends to have a "private" character owing to the "unusualness" of his beliefs and his knowledge, Shakespeare wrote his plays almost straight off without needing to change what he wrote down.

Obviously this is an exaggeration, and we know that epic language was not talked by carpenters, yet it raises some interesting

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questions. In the nineteenth century the social implications in poetry were underestimated, and the individual work of "great poets" was stressed—and still more their individual "inspiration." Though this impression may still exist, nowadays it is more generally realized that a poet cannot be explained independently from his age, and much of the work and the "vision" that made him was the creation of society, by a body of nameless people who played a silent part like the nameless people who built the Gothic cathedrals. It was thanks to their work of unaware and unconscious creation, thanks to the "culture" of the England of that time, that Shakespeare and Jonson were possible.

Another way of approaching the same question would be to compare the common engravings on monuments, the political statements, and jottings about affairs of our age with those of the Elizabethans. If we do this without any particularly expert knowledge we certainly get an impression that in the Elizabethan period the common style was powerful and expressive. We are not pulled up by dead words and phrases in it. We are left with a sense of life, not with the sense of tiredness we get from the common style of today. It seems as though an Elizabethan ordering bread or beer produced a masterpiece which the flights of fancy of the modern rhetorician with his lapidary words are incapable of reaching. Or again we may turn to comparing domestic architecture and contrasting the Elizabethan house with our modern house. For domestic architecture also corresponds to the spirit of a time or expresses it. Do we not get an impression that Elizabethan architecture was "organic," it lived, whereas today our architecture, usually based on stereotyped production, lacks "organic" forms? By comparison our buildings seem "dead." Indeed that is the best we can say about them. Often they look like adorned corpses, for it is in decoration that the worst of our production becomes manifest.

Each modern writer obviously tackles his problem in his own way. If he is a novelist he may use *clichés* remorselessly with the hope that a certain power in his content may penetrate through them. Or he may write the spoken language while trying to eliminate the dead material. These are both common procedures and there are many variants. But before turning to detailed examples perhaps it is worth while looking back to earlier history. The Greco-Roman

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world had problems of language in the later age of the civilization which are not unlike ours. And it produced what might be called the "Alexandrian solution"—the concentration on purity of style and a bookish and classical language. The writer purifies and polishes his word-forms and sentences. He may even review the earlier classical literature to find words and phrases which have dropped out of current use, or quote ancient authors to justify himself when he is criticized, like a theologian quoting from the canon of the fathers. The word "Alexandrian" comes, of course, from the writers of the late Hellenic period who wrote this way. The Roman writers were also Alexandrian in a sense. A very good example of the artificial style of a late writer of the Alexandrian type was Apuleius, the author of *The Golden Ass*. His bookish command of Latin enabled him to gain fame as a prose writer and as a euphuist. The literary language he used was a composite achievement and he drew extensively on the early Latin writers, making remarkable use of pre-Ciceronian phrasing which was "dead" in the first century.

It would be easy to make lists of euphuists at the time of the Renaissance, or even pre-Renaissance Latin writers, who viewed "style" in an archaeological spirit as Apuleius did. But if we want to come nearer home in time it would perhaps be better to take up instead some of the so-called decadents of the late nineteenth century. As soon as one mentions Apuleius, Walter Pater and *Marius the Epicurean* come to mind. Pater was perhaps the most articulate exponent in modern England of the Alexandrian conception of literary work, of the polishing and refining of the now effete or "barbarous" spoken tongue into a classical language. Though Pater is completely out of fashion and the classical aestheticism he represented is remote from the spirit of an age of revolution and from the solution which English prose writers have generally adopted, he nevertheless affords an excellent example of the traditionalist attitude a man of letters might well adopt in a period of decline.

It may seem absurd to mention Marcel Proust, who was so much of an innovator in style, in connection with the decadent classicists. Proust's innovations, as is well known, were partly due to his sense of time. The long sentences with their hesitations and parentheses expressed the nerves and sensitiveness of the writer traveling

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back through the corridors of memory. In memory, as in dreaming, the time of immediate action no longer applies. The involved sentence was as necessary for Proust as was the flow of words without the restrictions of punctuation and the measurements of fully articulate and rational wakefulness for the dreaming of Mrs. Bloom with which Joyce's *Ulysses* closes. Yet on the other hand, Proust's aestheticism was that of the decadents. Proust adapted and strained conventional French syntax but he in no way tampered with words or endeavored to become more "vivid" by being less "refined." In his attitude to the vocabulary he was a typical Alexandrian, writing at a late period and in a late classical form. He did not struggle against this limitation or endeavor to introduce vitality by exploring the possibilities of slang and dialects. In this he was unlike Joyce: the effect he wished to give was not vitality.

Joyce is representative of those who tackled the problem of language not by accepting the limitations of our culture in its decline but by attempting to overcome them. In his youth he tried to manipulate English or Irish-English in the old familiar way—in the diary at the end of *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and in the not very successful poems of *Chamber Music*. In fact Joyce was as sensitive to the old language as any writer. I suspect that at times he was tempted to write like Apuleius, to use archaisms and abandon other thoughts.

But Joyce also wanted to write a living language—as living as sixteenth-century French was to Rabelais or sixteenth-century English to Shakespeare. And in fact he broke away from the classical language and developed another, based on the whole bazaar of modern European languages and dialects of English and on the new vitalist spirit which took the place of the old rationalism. I do not know whether we can consider that Joyce's experiment was successful, for there is one obvious difficulty. Nobody, so far as I know, has ever been able to read *Finnegans Wake* through from cover to cover. Nevertheless, in parts Joyce achieved magnificent and powerful effects which can be appreciated only after long and careful study and repeated reading aloud. To understand Joyce, even to understand him partially, requires a special knowledge of: Dublin, Jesuit schools, scholastic philosophy and theology, large sections of the history of diverse countries, different literatures and languages. The combination of such

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various kinds of knowledge as that of Pagan and Christian Latin literature and that of public houses and brothels in Dublin must be exceedingly rare. Hence Joyce was like a great artist working in materials which could not last more than a very short time. One is able to see, as it were, what a great artist he would have been objectively had his means been sufficient. But they were inevitably insufficient, and though a few now living may be able with difficulty to appreciate his private language and experience they are few and very soon there will be none—not even "archaeologists."

There is another aspect of Joyce which strikes me as being particularly interesting in relation to the points I have in mind. Joyce was an Irishman and he was one of many writers who benefited by knowing the Irish variant of English. I mean that the English of Synge or of Yeats—or of a number of other writers—was a more regenerate vehicle of expression than the English of, say, Francis Thompson or H. G. Wells. Of course Synge's English was to some degree artificial, and nobody ever spoke as the country people speak in *The Playboy of the Western World* or *Deirdre of the Sorrows.* But it was a better artifice than anything possible in England at that time; it was based on the awakening self-consciousness of a race, on the national movement, and it was richer and more natural than the English of Oxford.

As style is interrelated with sensibility, if one says that the style of the English in England is in some way dead one also implies that the sensibility and creativeness of the English in England is in some way dead. At present, Ireland apart, the United States has more interesting writers than England. The Americans too have in some measure living variants of English—dialects—to use in literature. There is in William Faulkner a poetic life which is lacking in the sophistication of Aldous Huxley. Even the slang of New York has a vividness which Cockney no longer has. Many an American dialect is rich and expressive compared with the thin intellectual precision (and deadness) of the correct English of the educated English office girl and the B.B.C. A number of other observations of this kind have been made recently, none of them conclusive, but all pointing in a particular direction: for instance, that many or most of the ablest American writers are not of English but of German or of some other stock, or that (as the recent war has shown) a large mass of English

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people have in some form or another an inferiority complex with regard to the American way of life and manners and American power. (This is a small yet indicative point, and it is worth comparing with the Anglomania which the French and other Continental Europeans developed after the revolutionary wars and the overthrow of Napoleon.) In the machine world we live in now America is more "metropolitan" than England, and it is possible that as the years pass the metropolitan center of the whole English-speaking world, to which all the rest is "provincial," may shift decisively to American cities—probably to New York—toward which English and perhaps other "artists" and "technicians" may be attracted as Greek philosophers and teachers were once drawn to Rome.

As language and society are so interrelated, this also leads one on to noting that the old stable and rooted society which formed an essential background to the journalism, say, of Addison, and of many Englishmen before him and after him, no longer exists. Or rather, it still exists in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge or in country rectories, but it has become "provincial" to the mainsprings and centers of English life: it has become a lost cause, merely surviving like the New England of Emerson and Thoreau in the surge of American power centered on New York and the Middle West. The new surge is barbarous and quantitative, it is a "revolt of the masses," a revolt of Berdyaev's barbarians "stinking of machinery," but it makes the old qualitative civilization seem like a kind of pedantry.

In this kind of dynamic society, language seems no longer liturgical, no longer symbolic: instead it has become functional and algebraic. That is to say that at best it is a kind of shorthand or a series of formulae which express scientific and mechanical relationships. It is thus suited to and in harmony with the things we commonly want to express. It is a vehicle primarily for *science* and not for art. And science is now in fact very largely succeeding in making art precious and provincial and driving it out of the central current of our daily life.

Of course language does not only perform algebraic functions at present, even if the colorless algebraic language of the best criticism is in some ways a more satisfactory use of words for us now than any other. The always growing snowball of industrial and technical

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revolution, with its dissemination of words through newsprint and the radio, and industrial tiredness which demands the kind of relaxation the cinema provides, have helped to corrupt and deaden awareness. That is to say that not only our language but also our cultural and spiritual life is being deadened and destroyed. The new dynamic life of society organized according to the tempo of machines and opposed to contemplation has only affected our language in the way in which it has affected everything else.

I do not believe, then, that a literary or aesthetic approach to the problem of language can be satisfactory. It may only help to show us why under present conditions the *métier* of the poet is a very difficult one. It will not show us why the *métier* of the contemplative or of the philosopher is perhaps more or equally or only just less difficult. Or why the *métier* of the engineer or the practical scientist or the dirt-track racer or the film star is particularly easy because of the harmony of these *métiers* with the tempo of machinery.

The hardening of our classical language was presumably inevitable. And the chances of survival of more flexible language in certain provinces of the Anglo-Saxon world and in certain dialects are apparently slight. There does occur to mind one further interesting happening in the last civilization with regard to language which has as yet no parallel in our civilization. In a sense, new vigor, as well as an entirely different tone, was given to the Latin language when it was declining into preciosity with the onrush of the Christian revolution. Admittedly the Latin of Augustine was not the Latin of Cicero. Augustine was using a language which was in some way like ours. But the dynamic vigor of Christian belief introduced something into Latin which it never had before: as can be seen if we can compare the language and sensibility of the Christians with what preceded them. The Christians followed St. Paul and the Gospels and for them writing was merely a means for expressing truth and passion unself-consciously. Very often the new language was crude and harsh, but sometimes it was magnificent in its power—judged purely aesthetically. So occasionally masterpieces even of poetry appeared, such as the *Vexilla Regis* or the *Dies Irae*.

But what is there in our society comparable to the Christian revolution either as regards depth or extent—as regards the change of spirit this revolution involved? Is there any movement which chal-

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lenges the form of life of contemporary men at its root and with energy and passion and on a large scale and sets up other standards—deriving from different spiritual principles—against the common lived principles, in every branch of life? The great revolution in our society which has changed the face of our lands and the character of our people is the industrial and mechanical revolution. This is not personal but works on the individual through the mass. It is not spiritual but so far has depended on an accentuation of material needs: and it tends to make people units and cogs in a mechanical system. Moreover, it appears to be destructive of the popular basis of "art" in its effects in so far as it substitutes something else—machine products.

In what I have said I might appear to be trying absurdly to make little of the achievement of outstanding contemporary writers and artists, those who, like James Joyce (or like Picasso, as was suggested to me after I had finished writing what appears above), have really mastered the data and the "experience" of our age and have transformed it into their work—just as their predecessors did who were "on top" of their time in their turn. There is a kind of arid criticism which always belittles whatever is contemporary as compared with earlier standards, just as there is a form of uncritical acceptance whereby the contemporary worker alone is praised and the work which has become tradition is left alone and forgotten.

But I am not really convinced that we can ever judge the work of our own time impartially, and I am not even sure what "impartial" means in this connection.

Perhaps I ought to put the problem now occurring to me in another way. There are moods when a painting by Picasso or Braque "says" something more immediate and vital than does the painting of Raphael. The poetry of Mr. Eliot may evoke a more immediate response than the poetry of Donne or Milton or Shakespeare. And I could make a similar parallel for the work of Joyce. Yet am I to say that Picasso is "greater" than Raphael or that Joyce is "greater" than Rabelais? I suspect that much of the confusion comes from the use of this word "great" whereby we compare achievements of different times in terms of a single, objective (but also undefined) standard of "greatness."

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One ground for the special appeal of these contemporary workers, of course, is the common bond of the experience and the life of the twentieth century. If this is so I need to suggest to myself that there is a barrier to my full appreciation of, say, Donne or Raphael (I deliberately take widely different examples) and I will never appreciate them as they were appreciated by their contemporaries because I do not know their language and experience in such a full and living way. I am helped by books it is true. I am also helped by the "universality of appeal" of these works.

And now I would like to substitute the phrase "universality of appeal" for "greatness" and then, to me at least, the problem of comparisons becomes less obscure. Joyce has a special appeal to those of us who know enough of his experience and of his language. But I believe that this appeal is limited in time and place by special technical difficulties. I do not believe that it is likely to exist in a hundred years' time, or even in fifty years' time. I am not sure that any contemporary can imitate Stendhal and say, "I will be understood in the year 2000." Yet the best work of today may well need to have "lived through" the experience of Joyce.

Let us suppose (which is unhappily far from impossible) that either as a result of barbarian invasions from without, or as a result of the growth of barbarism from within, our familiar Western culture or civilization should move into a dark age. When people awoke from such a period, after hundreds of years, and turned their minds once again to literature, culture, and history, we can imagine they would take an interest in our European achievements as we took an interest in those of the Greeks. But it is highly doubtful if they would turn particularly to our period. They would be interested rather in the great "classical" periods of European culture. I expect they would find much more appeal in a painting by Raphael than in one by Picasso. I am almost certain they would be unable to make anything of Joyce.

Finally, I note that what is good in the creative achievement of our time as regards literature and the arts appeals only to very small groups of people. There are now in fact two quite distinct literatures (and kinds of painting and music and architecture) existing concurrently: "popular" literature and "serious" literature. Is this situation to continue and become even more aggravated and paradoxical? If

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so may we not visualize the last "great artist" in the year 2100, working alone? He has developed to the full a subjective technique for saying what he wants to say, and he works with all the *élan* of the greatest masters. But he alone understands his technique and he alone understands what he is saying. To the world his work is a meaningless arrangement of words, lines, or colors. This is a caricature, but does it not hint at something in the awkward situation?

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PARIS LETTER

"Would you call the present situation an *extreme* one?" I asked a historian friend of mine. "It seems to me," he answered, "that an extreme situation is characterized by the fact that the individual is there confronted with, or crushed by, clearcut alternatives. In mortal danger, in the middle of a revolutionary upsurge, in the ignominy of a concentration camp, a man at least knows where he stands. But, if there is any extremity in the condition of the European individual today, it is an extremity of unclarity and ambiguity."

" '*Either* America *or* Stalin, *either* Communism *or* Gaullism,' they tell him, 'you must choose.' And does he choose? I don't think so. I think that it is a mere figure of speech to call choice the act by which a French citizen today acquiesces to the inevitability of the dilemma, and eventually *follows* one kind of crowd or the other. He follows, while being convinced that *neither* America *nor* Stalin, *neither* Communism *nor* Gaullism, is really the answer. To use Koestler's image (which contrary to what Koestler thinks, can work both ways), very little perspicacity is needed to realize that there is no black and white, only different shades of gray. In fact, the arguments used by the different political groups, the way in which they state their dilemmas, implies that the either/or alternative is intended for public use, while in reality the choice is between lesser evils, shades of gray, expedients."

"No shrewd Stalinist propagandist today argues that one must be a Communist because the Soviet state is a model for socialist construction, but rather that one should stick to the CP because it is the *only available* instrument in the struggle against capitalism. Similarly, the real argument of the Gaullists is not that De Gaulle is a second Joan of Arc, but the he is the *only available* man under whose authority the French state can be rescued from the quagmire of Third Force fickleness. Such arguments surely permit the individual to remain distraught and perplexed, even though he may straggle along with the parade. There is nothing desperate, nothing extreme, in such a state of mind. It is not

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evident to people at large that some other political choice does not exist."

"At the bottom of all this I can see social stagnation and apathy, but I don't see that people are possessed by the feeling of a dire emergency threatening them, which requires a miracle of energy on their part. People today don't believe in miracles of any kind any longer, much less in political messianism. What they really feel is that history is being made without them anyway, and that performing some symbolic act of worship to some traditional idol, like the Revolution or the Fatherland, is about all they can do to assert their presence on the scene. That is why Europe today resembles a ghetto, rather than a gallant three-master tossed by a storm."

I must say that the type of arguments I had heard from a number of people, especially Gaullists and Communists, tended to confirm my friend's diagnosis. I asked, for example, a well-known French scholar and publicist who has recently joined the Rassemblement du Peuple Français, what reasons he would give to prove that De Gaulle does not mean fascism. He answered that, in his opinion, a fascist ideology contains four ingredients: 1) anti-Communism; 2) reinforcement of the State; 3) nationalism; 4) a war of conquest as the final issue. "Now," argued this intellectual, "De Gaulle certainly stands for the first two points, but not for the other two. He accepts the idea of a united Europe, and when he thinks of war, he simply thinks of the necessity to do everything possible to make France ready to withstand Stalin's probable onslaught."

"But," I retorted, "are you sure that De Gaulle is not a nationalist in the sense that he conceives of France as a monarchic entity requiring a certain type of behaviour and rejecting certain others, and whose commands can finally be interpreted only by the leader? After all, this is the essence of nationalism. Besides, don't you think that De Gaulle's insistence, whenever he speaks of Europe, on the notion that Europe's unity can be achieved only under French leadership, reveals more than a little national egocentrism? As for war, does it really matter whether the war one prepares for is a defensive or an offensive one, once the danger of war is considered to create a state of emergency and authorize a methodically drastic action on the part of the government?"

"I won't deny," said my interlocutor, "what everybody knows, namely that De Gaulle has a somewhat hermetic, and possibly outdated, notion of France's mission, as well as of his own with regard to France. But what is politically relevant is the fact that this notion gives him the singlemindedness which is needed to break the present political stalemate. I might even agree that De Gaulle is a poor politician, and not

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really a statesman, except in the classical sense of a man who wants to make new fundamental laws. Still, he is the only man who can keep France united while operating a series of drastic but inevitable changes."

"What about the social program of the RPF?" I asked.

"Frankly, all I can say is that we are trying to have one," was the answer, "and it is not an easy job. There are too many oldfashioned conservatives among us. If only the Socialists could understand that the choice is between us and the CP. But all they do is to be afraid that if they don't call us fascists the Stalinists will call them "social traitors," which they do anyway. Hence, in spite of the great influence of such men as Soustelle, Vallon, and Malraux, the left wing of the RPF remains rather weak. If you want to know what I personally think, I can tell you that I am a Gaullist because I think that Gaullism is a chance for conservatism. By conservatism, I mean a principle of government which allows for specific progress, and definite changes. At the opposite pole there is the ideology of Revolution, which is that of the Communists, namely the will to seize power in order to change everything. Since I don't believe in changing "everything," and since I don't see any force in France today, capable of introducing the partial reforms that are needed, except the RPF, I am with the RPF. I don't expect any miracles. What I expect is a minimum of rationality and realism, more especially I expect De Gaulle to give us a State which will be strong and limited, instead of being both impotent and omnipresent, like the one we have today. As for the rest, I am an oldfashioned liberal. Only, I think that today civil liberties cannot be saved except through a period of emergency powers. Even if De Gaulle should establish a kind of dictatorship, it would only last a couple of years. In any case, De Gaulle will do no worse than the Third Force."

"Do you feel confident of it?" I asked.

"Not quite, I must say," answered this intellectual, "but the risk must be taken, since we have no choice."

So, here was a man who had joined a movement which claims to stand for nothing if not for "energy, clarity, and firmness of purpose," and who at the same time was aware that 1) the leader of the movement is a symbol rather than a political man; 2) the movement itself gives no guarantee as to the direction it may take, and has no program on the crucial issue of the day, which happens to be also the one on which the enemy (i.e., the Stalinists) is strongest; 3) the whole enterprise, if successful, might have no better effects than the ones that are being denounced as the worst imaginable. Only in France, I felt, the will not to be a dupe can play such tricks.

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The day of the Bedell Smith-Molotov affair I saw a young man whom I have known for many years, and toward whom personally I feel very friendly. He is a CP member, and, because of the outstanding role he has played in the resistance movement, occupies now a rather important position. That day he appeared to be immensely amused by the trap sprung on that dope of an American ambassador by Comrade Molotov. I told him that maybe the joke was not so funny, and that, in any case, I didn't feel that it took us nearer a state of peace. My friend didn't agree: Molotov's was a master stroke, and it would force America to accept negotiations, instead of being so irresponsibly "tough." He went on to say that the real obstacle to an understanding between America and the Soviet Union were Messrs. Bidault and Bevin, with their ridiculous claim that, before making peace, Moscow and Washington should listen to British and French quibbling. "In other words," I said, "you would like America and Russia to get together." "I certainly would," he said, "otherwise we haven't got a chance." "And on what basis do you think they could agree?" I insisted. "On the very good basis of our backs, my dear," answered my Stalinist friend, with a hearty laugh.

Earlier in the conversation, he had explained to me the Stalinist line of "chauvinism in every country," and its systematic opposition to any idea whatsoever of a United Europe, by saying that European capitalism was selling countries wholesale to its American masters, and couldn't carry out its schemes without the cover of Europeanism. Hence, the defense of national interests had become one of the main tasks of the working class.

This, it now appeared, was a theory for the possibly transitory period of the "cold war." As soon as the atomic lightning of naked power politics struck, however, dialectics would automatically be put out of action, and the only rational thing to do would be to resign oneself to naked force, with no illusions as to the softening effects of ideologies on it. Which is, after all, what Europeans are doing right now. They hardly need Marxist indoctrination in this, since their backs are already sore enough from the burden of geopolitics. What is the use of improvising cumbersome theories, if they can't even hide the fact that they finally serve no purpose, and the fundamental question remains the same for everybody?—I could have asked my friend. But I didn't, and just took notice that, for him too, black and white were colors for public use, while in private he saw gray, like everybody else.

The gray became even darker for this particular Communist when the Tito affair burst into the headlines. The ideological hocuspocus of the Cominform he didn't find hard to swallow, except for the style,

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which, he agreed, was depressing. But he was seriously bothered by the procedure adopted by comrade Zhdanov. As Tito promptly pointed out, the Yugoslav party had been excommunicated directly by its brother, the Russian party, and all that Duclos, Togliatti, and the rest of the gang, had been allowed to do was to decorate with their signatures the Russian ukase after it had already been sent to Belgrade. That was a dark foreboding. It was the *official* notice broadcast to all and sundry, capitalists and proletarians, faithful and faithless, that there could not be anything like an indigenous policy of this or that CP. Up to now, in France as well as in Italy, the Communist propaganda line has not been that "we are going to do just what they did in Russia," but, on the contrary, that Communism would take different, and autonomous, forms in each country, and especially in the highly civilized West. At the same time, the conviction has been common among the militants, that "when it comes to France (or Italy), the Russians will not be able to just push us around like Bulgarians, they will have to reckon with *us* (the base)." The hammer that hit Tito left little standing of such hopes. It was another cause for resignation to *force majeure* added to many others. "So, you are going to hold your nose and gulp down this one too," I told my friend. "What else can we do? There is no alternative," he answered.

If their party's day to day tactics gave them some ground for believing that they are headed for something like Revolution, the Stalinists would probably be the only ones today who could successfully entertain a mood of extreme situation. But they can't. The brightest political perspective that is offered them is that of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. "What would you do if the Red Army occupied France?" I asked my friend. "It would be a damn rotten business," was his answer. To such an eventuality, no doubt, the most ardent and most sincere militants would vastly prefer that of an underground struggle against "home reactionaries and American imperialism" in case of war. This would at least involve some idealism. But they can hardly *hope* for such a thing to happen.

The fact is that, after the Czechoslovakian coup, the Italian election, and the Tito affair, and after the failure of last winter's political strikes, the CP's are condemned to a policy of systematic and politically schizophrenic agitation deprived of any intelligible prospect. In reality, the Cominform and their leadership have manoeuvered them into a position in which they can do little else except push defensive actions in all possible directions. Only the mistakes of their adversaries, the establishment of a dictatorship, or war, can get them out of their pre-

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sent fix. A good party member will of course, be able to explain away a dozen of Himalayas. Sympathizers, however, are less well trained, and less ready to look like indoctrinated dunces. You can put a French CP sympathizer to a crucial test by asking him two questions: 1) Do you think that the CP policy is a policy *for* peace? 2) Do you see any other outcome of present CP domestic policies than a strong reaction? After a greater or lesser amount of shuffling, and sometimes right away, the answer will be "no" on both counts. As of today, the French Communists expect some favorable development from three directions. First, in October, when the elections for the Council of the Republic (the almost purely nominal legislative body which has taken the place of the old Senate) will be held, the RPF, which run nearly 40% of the municipalities, while having no representatives in the National Assembly, are sure to win a considerable victory. At that moment, the Communists hope to be able to take the lead of a movement for the "defense of the Republic." Secondly, thanks to the blithe ineffectiveness of the Government, the social question, which today simply means the question of the relation between prices and wages, remains as bitter as ever. Thirdly, the Communists think (and their view is supported by a number of experts) that the Marshall Plan will have no visible effects on French economy. To these three reasons for optimism, the Communists add a fourth one, which is the noticeable comeback of "clericalism" into French life, especially in the school system. Here too, the CP, helped by the fact that the Socialists are the allies of the Catholics in the Government, might well try to organize the exploitation of traditional French anti-clericalism, which remains a strong social factor.

These calculations are certainly not unfounded. It is, however, hard to conceive how, even under the most favorable (i.e., the worst) political circumstances, the Stalinists could go beyond the stage of demagogic agitation, as long as they are obliged to adopt Stalin's contraceptive measures, which they certainly will be as long as there is no war. The amazing thing is that CP tactics still seem to be based on the notion that the proletariat must *almost* make the Revolution in order to allow Messrs. Duclos and Thorez to get back into the government. And this is the most resplendent victory that can be promised to the suffering French masses today by the party of Marx-Lenin-Stalin. Even if such a triumph were possible, it is hard to see how the aforesaid gentlemen could repeat for the second time the performance which consists in exploiting ministerial advantages while making the other fellow responsible for all mismanagement and unpopular measures.

The most revealing symptom of Stalinist weakness seems to me

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the fact that they still feel obliged to stick to the Popular Front idea: "the rally of all progressive forces against reaction and for the defense of French independence." This when even the "anti-antistalinists" feel that accepting Communist company is about as safe as keeping a copperhead under your shirt—which feeling is one of the main reasons for the undeniable decline of Stalinism. Stalinism was strong as long as it could win over and control non-Stalinist elements, seduce them into believing that it was the last refuge of political idealism, and that, in spite of all the circuitousness, the CP would take them *somewhere*. With the incalculably precious help of the Kremlin, such illusions have by now been dispelled. "I don't like them. But if they are persecuted I will be on their side," is the boldest pronouncement an "anti-antistalinist" is willing to make at present. Once again, such ways of speaking, especially when resorted to by intellectuals, express a last mulish reluctance to relinquish certain ideological habits, rather than a conviction, or a choice. If I were a Communist, I would not put much trust in any such resolve.

The main contribution of a certain kind of intellectual to the CP cause (as, in earlier times, to the cause of Fascism) is the spinning out of verbal justifications. I heard a French professor, the holder of a number of State sinecures, say of the Cominform edict against Tito: "How beautiful. A true Church style. You can think what you please, but in our time only the Communists are in a position to talk such a language." An utterance which my Stalinist friend would have considered perfectly ludicrous. Seriously speaking, however, on the level of culture and intellectual life, the Stalinists have by now suffered a complete loss of face, which was not the case two years ago, when the Communist position was still being discussed with consideration, if not with awe.

Among the latest symptoms of the wearing out of Communist witchery, one can certainly count the unexpectedly great success of Camus' *The Plague* (over 100,000 copies sold, at a moment when buying a book is a luxury), and the equally great success of Sartre's *Les Mains Sales* which has been playing for four months to sold out houses. (The play has now closed, but will open again in the fall) Camus' novel is neither faultless nor written to please, but the general public have apparently found in it an answer to their yearning for ordinary humaneness and good sense. The moral of *The Plague* is that the only adequate answer to an extreme situation is to stick to normal human behavior. The book is not specifically directed against Communism, and yet it has been interpreted in this sense by both the Communists and their adversaries. As for Sartre's play (an intellectual product so curious, and so

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curiously ambiguous, that it would deserve a detailed analysis), it has no moral at all, and is not really an anti-Communist play. In spite of its tragic plot, it is a comedy, the reduction to absurdity of Communist logic with no particular conclusions drawn from it. But from the point of view of the public, *Les Mains Sales* inevitably appears as a savage attack on Communist mentality and tactics. An irresistible piece of theatrical engineering in the good oldfashioned nineteenth century tradition, the play certainly owes a great deal of its success to the moment in which it was produced. Sartre knows a lot about timing. Such a public undressing of the "Stalinist situation" as his latest play could hardly have been conceivable in 1946, when the CP was still "the party of the executed."

The decline of the CP does not mean at all that light is beginning to shine over France. It simply suggests that, in an atmosphere of political freedom and peace, in which people would at least begin to have the feeling that their urgent needs are being reasonably taken care of, the CP would constantly lose ground. For the time being, however, the rabid anti-Communism of the Right (which intends to make the defeat of the CP a victory for nationalism, colonialism, and social conservatism), together with the ineptitude of the Socialists, tend to slow down, rather than accelerate, the process. So that, up to now, the most efficient agent of Communist disintegration remains Comrade Stalin.

Nicola Chiaromonte

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BOOKS

NARROW VIEWS OF JAMES JOYCE

JAMES JOYCE: Two Decades of Criticism. Edited by Seon Givens. Vanguard Press. $5.00.

Mr. Givens' collection, which makes nearly as large a volume as *Finnegans Wake,* includes nineteen essays on Joyce, of which seventeen have been published elsewhere in reviews or as parts of books. Some are important early appreciations, like those of Eliot and Foster Damon; some, like those of Stuart Gilbert, Frank Budgen and Eugene Jolas, are based on personal acquaintance with Joyce; some are valuable recent reinterpretations by younger critics like Irene Hendry and Hugh Kenner. The essays are plausibly arranged to cover Joyce's work in proper sequence, and many of them were good for their time and place, and stand up well on rereading. Yet they do not make a book, and cannot be conceived as a book, even a reference book, since there is no index and most of the material included is discursive rather than topical in character. It is hard to see who would use this collection or for what end, except the convenience of not having to look up in bound periodicals the three or four essays in Mr. Givens' volume which a student of Joyce might want to know in addition to the material already available in book form.

Early pieces here like Eliot's "Ulysses, Order and Myth," have been exhaustively quoted, discussed and assimilated by later critics seizing desperately on anything that looked like authoritative guidance. The essays by Gilbert, Jolas and Budgen seem slight beside the books which two of them have published, and beside Gorman's *Life* and the collection *Our Exagmination.* And a reader who knows Joyce well enough to judge the close and radical reasoning of Hugh Kenner's "The Portrait in Perspective" will find little to profit him in six or seven of the more elementary essays, including some recent ones by Englishmen. Since the essayists are not collaborating, the result is a tedious deal of overlapping and repetition, with the same references appearing again and again, though sometimes with arbitrarily opposite interpretations. Obviously if an introduction to Joyce' work is wanted, the guides of Harry Levin,

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Stuart Gilbert and Campbell-and-Robinson are much more coherent and comprehensive.

To read steadily through these pages is to find the total Joyce growing more and more remote and being replaced by a textbook ideogram of his work based on the repetition of a fairly small number of quotations and references; yet the persistent reader may gain from it a fairly clear sense of the limitations and difficulties of Joyce criticism. Like Eliot, Joyce makes wonderful material for the favored mode in contemporary criticism, the feminine and subservient elucidation of a difficult text in which the critic, giving himself up completely to the work of art, takes on himself for a time its glory and its power. But this is an anxious service, even when it is most devoted and apparently perceptive. One can make dreadful *gaffes,* as several footnotes in this volume show.

Moreover, in everything about their work which most fascinates contemporary critics—obscurity, erudition, allusiveness, language, orthodoxy—Joyce excels Eliot, and the huge size of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* compared to *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* permits an overwhelming complexity of interrelationships. If Levin and Shattuck, in a long essay reprinted here, could discover for the first time in 1944 that there was a detailed correspondence between the *Odyssey* and *Dubliners* (a correspondence that throws a strange light on the "order and myth" of some of the later correspondences), who knows what unpredictable discoveries lie years ahead in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake?* With this possibility before them, and warned by the example of the older critics like Gosse, More, Brooks and Stoll, who felt that they could attack without understanding, and with all but two writing since 1939 in a period in which criticism grounded in the historical-social context is out of favor, the critics in this volume put their emphasis not on judging or "placing" Joyce, or relating the inside to the outside, but almost wholly on attempting to find out what he is doing within the limits of his own intentions and ideas.

This, too, is easier with Eliot, because though Eliot refuses to write official interpretations of his own poems, he has expressed himself so fully and explicitly on all other subjects. Joyce, however, since his two youthful essays on Ibsen and Mangan, has published only creative work. What he wanted known of its patterns he revealed through intimates whose dependability cannot be judged. As David Daiches has complained, they have told us very little of Joyce's reading in his later years, though they secured books for him and often read them aloud. They have also told us very little about the composition of *Finnegans*

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Wake, though they were allowed to collaborate to a curious extent in piecing out the text.

As a result, those who wish to explain Joyce's work in terms of his intentions have had to depend on the last part of *A Portrait* as a statement of Joyce's mature attitudes and literary program, though actually, as Kenner says, it is the portrait of the artist as a young man, a young man whose inadequacies and vanities as artist and person are cruelly exposed in *Ulysses.* Desiring to outdo their rivals and still stay within what they conceive to be Joyce's own intentions, many critics try further elaborations of the schemes and correspondences characteristic of Joyce, instead of asking what these schemes and correspondences really mean. *A Portrait* is "lyric," *Ulysses,* "epic," *Finnegans Wake,* "dramatic, its structural rationale being the super-imposition of the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles upon the Mass." Stephen represents spirit; Bloom, mind; Molly, flesh; and so on. For most critics Bloom is father and Stephen, son; but Foster Damon, in a post-script written in 1947, is surprised that no one has followed up his identification of Bloom and Dedalus with Christ and Satan, which "is the great clue to the fundamental structure of the book." Damon also works out a complete correspondence between *Ulysses* and *Paradise Lost,* but without discussing Joyce's complete negation of the Protestantism, moralism and political responsibility which underlay Milton's work. Similarly, though several critics conclude with statements about myth parallel to those Eliot made in 1923, there has been no adequate discussion of what it means for an orthodox mind to give order and significance to contemporary anarchy by giving it the structure of a pagan myth, or of the way in which references to the past enable one to "transcend" the present, or of the relation of Joyce's consciously devised identifications to the unconscious archetypes studied by Miss Bodkin, or of the relation of the comic monomyth in *Finnegans Wake* to the Protestant, Christian sense of a moral and meaningful human history.

Reading through Mr. Givens' collection one finds that the critics, because they stay so cautiously within Joyce's apparent intentions, give little help on some of the most fundamental problems in his work. Ending *Ulysses* with Molly Bloom is declared a stroke of genius, but there is wide disagreement about the character of her affirmation, and almost no consideration of the dramatic adequacy of the personal relationships in *Ulysses* for the burden of meaning they are made to carry. This is even more striking in the treatment of *Finnegans Wake,* and begins with the whole question of the kind of awareness it presents, and of Joyce's comic self-portrait as Shem the penman.

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Such matters cannot begin to be determined unless there is more attempt among critics to combine an inside and outside view of Joyce so that they can see to what extent his work is shaped by clarity, integrity, and so on, by meaningful intentions which the critics can accept as ideas, and to what extent it represents Joyce being forced by his situation to make the best of his talents and temperament, and arbitrarily and ingeniously bringing together all the diverse, incompatible, but brilliant and exciting material that found life in his amazing mind. The perspective for an outside view exists, but there has been little recent disposition to develop it. In the present volume only Farrell alludes to it. It involves, of course, "paralysis" and "stasis" and "quiddity," the condition of Ireland after Parnell, the Thomist conception of beauty, the non-contextual realm of essences, the Catholic attitude toward history, the flight in contemporary culture, for historical reasons, from the historic sense to the cosmic sense, and many other elements which make a comprehensible frame within which Joyce's work can be illuminatingly placed, and which is necessary for understanding it from the inside, as well.

Because of the different kinds of knowledge and experience required for such a view, critical works on Joyce to which a number of people contribute are very necessary. But the wastefulness of the present volume suggests that such symposia should be carefully planned, with topics agreed upon long in advance, and with the contributors in frequent touch with each others' works. One can imagine not only a volume made up of the investigations of experts in theology, philology, medieval mysticism, etc., but also a volume in which less specialized and more literary critics attempt a frank, full and even risk-taking discussion of some of the unexamined assumptions which have been uneasily transmitted in Joycean criticism for so many years.

Robert Gorham Davis

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THE PLAGUE. By Albert Camus. Knopf. $3.00.

The dramatic time of *The Blood of Others* is limited to a single night, during which Jean Blomart is watching by the death bed of his mistress, Hélène Bertrand. Jean, as the leader of a French Resistance group, had sent Hélène on the mission from which she was brought back mortally wounded. At dawn, and the end of the book, Hélène dies.

Why, we might ask, has Simone de Beauvoir used this particular device as the frame for her novel? The answer is not given by the text. Its story is straightforward enough. Jean begins at the beginning, as the child of a middle class family. He develops a social conscience; breaks with his family in order to become a "working-class man" (an expression several times repeated); joins the Communist party; breaks with the party after his friend, Jacques, whom he has persuaded also to join, is killed in a demonstration; becomes an a-political syndicalist; has an affair with Hélène (though he will not say, "I love you"); is wounded during the War; joins the Resistance; and sends Hélène to her death.

Quite conceivably, these turning episodes and their ancillary events could all have been refracted through the lens of Hélène's night of dying and Jean's death-watch. There might have been achieved an intense concentration of the novel's energies. But there is nothing of the sort. The device is only a trick, like the italicized passages, the shifts between third and first person, the unparseable sentences, or the abrupt transitions from scene to scene which are too obvious to have even the minor merit of an engaging puzzle. Mlle. de Beauvoir, it would seem, is proving to her customers that she knows her twentieth century novel.

For the temporal device, however, there is no doubt a reason beyond simple snobbishness. Simone de Beauvoir is the principal colleague of Sartre. Sartrian Existentialism is preoccupied with extreme situations, of which death is the most extreme. Man has initially no essence, but only existence. The meaning of his existence is established in relation to nothing, that is, to death—of each man, in relation to his own death. I *am* nothing now; no judgment about me can be made; all of my existence becomes defined only at the moment of my death—the same moment, by absurd paradox, when I become eternally nothing. ("You are there, on the bed, in the fierce light of your own death.") As an existentialist, Simone de Beauvoir has erected a plausible platform on which to assemble her material.

The entire book is a juggle with the existentialist categories: guilt,

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existence, aloneness, anxiety, freedom, responsibility, death, despair. In the world of *The Blood of Others,* a man can't jump into bed with a girl until they have annotated freedom, existence and guilt.

She looked at me reproachfully. "You are funny. You have said to me often that you respect other people's liberty. And you make decisions for me and treat me like a thing."

"I don't want you to be unhappy."

"And if I prefer to be unhappy? It's for me to choose."

"Yes," I said, "it's for you to choose."

She leaned her cheek against my hand. "I have chosen. . . ."

"It's not true, it's not me." I wanted to shout those words when Hélène looked at me with eyes full of admiration and love. And yet it was true: it was I. . . . "I dither about between my guilty conscience and my scruples; my one and only aim is not to dirty my hands. . . ."

Hélène interrupted me by placing her soft, fair lips on mine.

"That's what's so wonderful about you, you're so self-sufficient that I feel that you've created your own self."

Often it is tossed together with proletarian-novel jargon. At this level:

"The main point is to get the same result."

"But it's impossible to dissociate the result from the struggle that leads up to it. Hegel explains it so well; you ought to read him."

"I haven't time. . . ."

As long as you wonder if the workers' cause is really your own, it won't be. Just say: it is my cause. . . ."

"You know, intervention might entail heavy consequences."

"Why don't you try striking? Perhaps Blum would give in."

"I don't want a strike for political reasons. . . ."

"In any case," he said, "it wouldn't be difficult to get arms through clandestinely and to authorize the signing up of volunteers. . . ."

"But," I said, "it's no small matter to drive a country into war."

It's really rather dreadful. Mlle. de Beauvoir just doesn't seem to be a novelist. Her book is neither philosophy nor fiction. The philosophical problems, never fused to the concrete, are diluted into platitudes, a name-brand flavoring for pulp-level tripe.

The trouble is not the philosophical starting-point. The novel has proved the most yielding of aesthetic forms. Example shows that though the writer's original impulse may be directed toward some factor closely bound to the medium—plot or character or verbal symbol, it is often attached to such aesthetically accidental goals as social reform, historical interpretation, ethical standard, or salvation. But in every case, the novel is not exempt from the rule of all art, that meanings are legitimately present only when they are translated into specific terms of the particular medium that is being used. A painting, too, can be philosophical, but not by stating a syllogism.

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Albert Camus makes plain enough, in *The Plague,* that his objective is philosophical and moral. But he has the ability, and has taken the trouble, to write a novel. There is nothing fancy about his methods. He has chosen a form as rigorous and conventional as that of a play by introduction describes the scene, the town of Oran in Algeria.

> How to conjure up a picture, for instance, of a town without pigeons, without any trees or gardens, where you never hear the beat of wings or the rustle of leaves—a thoroughly negative place, in short? . . . Perhaps the easiest way of making a town's acquaintance is to ascertain how the people in it work, how they love, and how they die. In our little town (is this, one wonders, an effect of the climate?) all three are done on much the same lines, with the same feverish yet casual air. The truth is that everyone is bored, and devotes himself to cultivating habits. . . . It will be said, no doubt, that these habits are not peculiar to our town; really all our contemporaries are much the same. . . .

Then the rats appear, and the plague begins. The gates of the town are closed, the inhabitants walled into exile. The plague, and the struggle against it, reach their climax; the plague suddenly begins to recede. The town is liberated, the gates opened, the victory celebrated. The narrator, finally identified, ends with a short, meditative coda.

The sentences, superbly translated by Stuart Gilbert, are grammatically finished, elegant in syntax, precise, almost austere. As in Kafka, by whom Camus has surely been influenced, there is seldom, in the style, any showiness, and never any drop into vulgarity. The irony, a tone implicit in the word order rather than declared, completes the transmutation of the whole from personal expression into art, an object made.

The strong girders of his basic structure permit Camus an effective freedom in interior arrangement. He is able to introduce the grotesque, and to be sure that the grotesque will function as it so often does in art to deepen the sense of conviction: the little old man on the balcony, who attracts the street-cats below in order to spit on them; the burial problems as the plague expands; the family dining habits of M. Othon, and his stiff collar in the quarantine camp; the colored chalks and the "one fine morning" phrase of Joseph Grand's; the asthmatic patient who tells time by shifting dried peas in two saucepans.

The strength of the general form of Camus' story is not surprising. It is the story, is it not, of the sun which sets, to rise again after the perils of the night; of the war against Troy, so carelessly begun, so long and painfully fought, and at last so bitterly won; of the trial, and the initiation ceremony; of Dante, who must journey through the lowest depth before he can be brought from a slave to liberty; of the labors of Herakles, the voyage of Odysseus, the underground exile of Persephone and Osiris.

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It would seem, therefore, to be a mistake to give any such unilinear interpretation of this novel as that which has made it an allegory of the Nazi occupation of France. Like the traditional myth-form of which it is an instance, *The Plague* is multivalent, since its most general meaning is simply the brute challenge of existence.

Nevertheless, Camus insists, too openly perhaps, that he intends his story as an allegory, almost a fable and moral lesson. We should observe, then, his variants in the universal form he has chosen.

"He knew that the tale he had to tell could not be one of a final victory. . . . The plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good." The cycle of the trial and the purgation must be endlessly repeated; "they must set their shoulders to the wheel again"; or, like Sisyphus, whom Camus earlier selected, descend the hill always once more to retrieve the stone which will never come to rest on the summit. This, however, is not private. It is primarily in the Christian version of the myth that victory is final. Persephone, Tammuz, Orpheus, Osiris, must return every year; even Odysseus hints, at the end, that his journey will have to begin again; and the sun, rising triumphant, will always sink once more through bloody clouds into the darkness.

It is less usual that even in the victory of the single cycle there is no assurance that the hero's acts have been efficacious. The plague comes unsuspected, through no man's agency, out of the unknown. At its climax, "the plague had swallowed up everything and everyone," and the combatants had only "the fancy that they were still behaving as free men and had the power of choice." It recedes at its own good time and place—"all that could be said was that the disease seemed to be leaving as unaccountably as it had come."

Still more unusual, directly counter to all variants of the traditional myth-form, there is no single hero (or semi-hero, since there could hardly be a full hero if destiny is altogether implacable). Dr. Rieux, who is identified with the narrator, comes closest, but he does not sufficiently outshine Tarrou, Rambert, Dr. Castel, or even Joseph Grand and Father Paneloux.

As there is no single hero, there is no unified attitude toward the plague, and no unique lesson to be drawn. Only Cottard is rejected: because he was glad of the plague ,and did not fight it (even though the fight is doubtless vain) but exploited it for his own interests. "His only real crime is that of having in his heart approved of something that killed off men, women, and children. I can understand the rest, but for *that* I am obliged to pardon him." But when Rambert asks Rieux, "Maybe I'm all wrong in putting love first," Rieux replies "vehemently,"

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"No . . . you are *not* wrong." Rieux accepts equally Tarrou's explanation: "I loathe men's being condemned to death," his resolution to be always on the victims' side, and his final admission, "It comes to this . . . what interests me is learning how to become a saint. . . . Can one be a saint without God?—that's the problem, in fact the only problem."

As for Rieux himself, like Camus' stoic Sisyphus, he does his duty, "what had had to be done," he wins the Sophoclean "knowledge through suffering," "all a man could win in the conflict between plague and life . . . knowledge and memories."

These departures from the universal myth-form seem to me defects. They can readily enough be explained as a response to the overwhelming plagues of our time—though are they really more terrible in historical fact, when we remember how many more weapons we have, or might use, to fight them? I regret especially that Camus, who is so fine an artist, felt the need to make the moralizing so explicit (and therefore somewhat banal)—though it was perhaps just the cloudiness of the lessons that spurred the need. He could have had more confidence in his myth which, if the artist's work is completed, is able, in its own way, to speak for itself.

James Burnham

BOGS ALONG THE MIDDLE PATH

A STUDY OF LITERATURE FOR READERS AND CRITICS. By David Daiches. Cornell. $2.75.

David Daiches suffers from none of the more spectacular vices of current criticism. He is not portentous, willful or self-indulgently erudite; he does not confuse his own ideas with those of the writer he happens to be discussing; he is sufficiently worldly to realize that no single critical notion or catchphrase can serve as a magic lever to lift all works of literature into transparent glory; and he avoids stylistic mannerisms, affecting neither the style of constipated profundity nor of elegaic disenchantment. Considering himself a humanist in the more generous sense of the term, he follows "the middle path" in criticism, and does so with intelligence, breadth, and tolerance. Yet, for all these considerable virtues, one feels a certain dissatisfaction after reading this book, a dissatisfaction, I think, worth looking into.

Exactly what *A Study of Literature* is supposed to be, or do, is something of a problem. Offhand, it seems intended for students. Daiches

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reports having asked a student why one should bother studying literature. Students being what they are, the answer was unsatisfactory; hence, this book to provide better answers. But if we are to credit its title, the book is also addressed to critics, who are or should be something more than students. The book is paralyzed by this conflict of purpose, and Daiches writes with one eye on the classroom and the other on the "literary audience," which he sometimes treats as if it too were in a classroom.

Specifically: Daiches develops a general exposition of literary values (the novel as art form; the characteristics of poetry; literature in relation to belief; the denotative and connotative uses of language) which, if addressed to critics and experienced readers, hardly contains anything so striking or closely worked as to warrant its existence. If, however, the book is addressed to students, it is a usable restatement, but is seriously marred by the occasional intrusions of Daiches the critic. When he is not merely reformulating common notions for novitiates and instead offers what is really *his* (a perceptive analysis of semi-literacy as a cultural condition, a teasing hint of what he calls the "esthetic distance" between the reader and the book, a very neat discussion of *Lycidas*), then he is a suggestive critic, of whom it might almost be said, 'tis a pity he's a teacher. The book seems, consequently, a fascinating bit of evidence of how the academic and the critic, in the same man, can get in each other's way.

But as a critic Daiches has some valuable things to say, even though they are isolated, sparse and undeveloped. He conducts an anonymous running attack against the more rigid of the "new critics" which I, for one, should have wished to see enlarged. It is good to read his sporadic attacks on "those critics . . . who in their zeal for "objectivity" try to nail down some aspect of literature without reference . . . to life (and who) are in danger of missing the one point about literature that really matters." But when Cleanth Brooks is meant, if he is meant, why not name him, so that the discussion will be in the open and Brooks can get his chance to rebut. Why does the humanist critic feel the need to be so genteel (and gentle) at the very point where he is most interesting?

Perhaps the trouble is that Daiches is a bit too untroubled, that rather than his critical self having been tripped up by his academic self, he has naturally, as it were, grown an academic skin. (I don't mean to suggest that teaching necessarily involves academicism, though it certainly seems to help.) Ten years ago Daiches wrote a book, little known in this country, called *Literature and Society* in which, rather crudely and skimpily, he tried to develop in Marxist terms the relation-

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ship between English society and its literature. For all its excesses, perhaps even to some extent because of them, it was a far more exciting book than this present one.

It is passion that we are lacking here (and of course not in Daiches alone)—the passion of commitment, of what is now called engagement; the passion which can never be a surrogate for criticism but without which criticism is almost always a dead duck. Somewhere in his consciousness Daiches is disturbed by this lack, for he occasionally writes a sentence that repudiates his whole approach. "Literary criticism," he says, "is always exaggerated, always metaphorical, always an oversimplification"—and, he might have added, often polemical. But to exaggerate, to oversimplify, to polemize one must have some pressing and uncontainable idea or feeling about the relationship between literature and experience, an idea or feeling that far transcends the mere recognition that there *is* such a relationship; and this Daiches, seemingly wary of repeating the sociological excesses of his youthful criticism, now lacks.

Daiches repeatedly warns us that critical judgment must rest on aesthetic grounds alone, which is beyond dispute. But what I should have wished him to add, and to add without hesitation, is that the engaged critic can never content himself, is in fact never able to content himself with only a literary judgement. The act of criticism is always, necessarily "impure," for the best critics, addressing themselves to their peers rather than to students, must write out of a pressing tension between their judgment of the work of art and their "larger interest," be it politics, religion, the writing of poetry or what have you. Such a situation, no doubt, always involves the danger that the extra-literary concern will be surreptitiously substituted for the critical judgment, but the price one usually pays for avoiding that danger is sterility. In any case, it is a danger that hardly seems prevalent today. Ten years ago it was considered necessary, and with some justice, to insist that the critic learn how to "get into" the work of art, but today, I think, it is necessary for the critic, once having gotten into it, to learn how to "get out" of a work of art, so that he may simultaneously be in and out of it, his vision focused, at whatever peril, on both the work of art and the world.

In these terms, Daiches' "middle path" hardly seems inviting at the moment. Perhaps I have been unfair in making his little book the occasion for these general remarks, but perhaps too it is a significant comment on his book that it leads one away from itself and towards such larger considerations.

Irving Howe

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A CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN TWO CORNERS

(*continued from p.* 965)

away. In this sense, culture is not only monumental, but also initiatory in spirit. For memory, its supreme ruler, makes its true servants partake in the "initiations" of the forefathers, and renewing these in them, communicates to them the energy of new beginnings, new exploits. Memory is dynamic beginning; oblivion is weariness and cessation of motion, decline and return to a condition of relative inertia. Like Nietzsche, let us alertly observe ourselves to discover whether the poisons of decline, the infection of "decadence," are not in us too.

What is decadence? The feeling of subtlest organic union with the monumental tradition of a high culture accompanied with the arrogant and burdensome awareness that we are the last of the line. In other words, it is a benumbed memory, which has lost its power of initiative, no longer enabling us to partake in the initiations of the forefathers and no longer releasing impulses of essential initiative—it is the knowledge that prophecies are no more, as is indicated in the title that the decadent Plutarch gave to one of his works, namely, "On the Decline of Oracles." All that our poor friend Lev Shestov is doing is to write a long and complex treatise on the same subject. The spirit no longer speaks to decadent men with its former voice, only the soul of bygone epochs speaks to him; in his spiritual impoverishment he turns exclusively to the psyche, he becomes wholly a psychologist and sees everything in psychological terms. Will he understand Goethe's creed that "Truth has been acquired long ago and has united the high community of spiritual minds. Endeavor to learn it, this old truth"?

For the psychologist, it is only more psychology. At least he suspects everything spiritual and objective of being psychological and subjective. And I recall another saying of Goethe's —Faust's words about Wagner: "He digs in the earth seeking the golden fruit, and rejoices when he finds a dew worm." Is not this like our friend who longs for the water of life, and who carries out his psychological searches and discovers the futility of theories? He should be left to his demon: let the dead bury the dead. To believe him means to allow dry rot to enter into one's spirit. This of

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course does not diminish our love for him, our tender pity for him and his work as a tragic and living gravedigger. We shall believe in the life of the spirit, in sainthood and initiations, in the invisible saints around us, in the countless united throng of wrestling souls, and we shall courageously walk farther, without looking about us or glancing backward, without measuring the way, without heeding to the voices of weariness and inertia that mutter about "poison in the blood," about "exhaustion in the bones."

One can be a gay wanderer on earth without leaving one's native town, and become poor in spirit without wholly forgetting all learning. We have long ago recognized that the understanding is a subordinate tool and servant of the will, useful to life like any of the body's lower organs; and the theories that saturate it, to use your words, can be given away to others as we give away useless books. But in the name of Goethe's "old truth" we shall deeply inhale the life-giving essence of these theories, these religions, their spirit and logos, their initiatory energy—and thus, carefree and curious, like strangers, we shall pass by the innumerable altars and idols of monumental culture, partly lying desolate, and partly restored and redecorated, stopping at will and sacrificing at the forgotten places wherever we discover unfading flowers invisible to others, flowers that have sprung up from an ancient grave.

V. I.

VIII.

To V. I. Ivanov:

You are a siren, my friend—your letter of yesterday is charming. It gave me the feeling that culture herself, personified, was cunningly tempting me with her riches and lovingly warning me against breaking with her. Yes, I cannot resist her voice—am I not her son? Not a prodigal son, as you think, but, what is even harder to endure, the son of a prodigal mother. Your diagnosis, my dear doctor, is decidedly incorrect; it is time that I should express myself more clearly. I do not want at all to turn mankind back to the philosophy and existence of the Fiji islanders, nor do I by any means want to unlearn writing and to expel the Muses; I dream not of little flowers in a clear glade. It seems to me that Rousseau too, who disturbed Europe with his dream, did not dream of a *tabula rasa;* this would have been a stupid, empty dream that could not have caught anyone's imagination.

This time you have formulated the basic issue of our dispute. Until now you have thought that, bored by the external achievement of culture, I was spitefully preparing to throw out the baby with the bath.

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No, no! I speak all the time of temptations of the spirit, of poison in the blood, in life itself; I speak precisely of the most precious achievements brought about in the course of thousands of years of experience, of what you call the genuine initiations of the forefathers, of objective and indisputable truth—and I say that this very life source of spiritual existence is poisoned and no longer gives life to the soul but deadens it.

What is in question is precisely the dynamism of discovered truth, its power to bring forth initiations of the spirit. You write: "For memory, its supreme ruler, makes its servants partake in the initiations of the forefathers, and renewing these initiations in them, gives them the strength for new beginnings, new exploits." O if only this were so! But it was so once—and ceased to be. It came to pass that the revelations of truth bringing light to the ancestors have changed into mummies, into fetishes, and no longer plunge into the soul like a blissfully destructive charge but bury it under the granite blocks and rubble of disintegrated ideas. Objective truth both is and is not; it exists in reality only as a way, a direction, but not as a ready-made datum, that can and must be appropriated, following the words of Goethe, which you quote. If it were true that "truth has long ago been acquired," then of course life would not be worth living. In the initiations of the forefathers, not their content is precious, because the content of any truth discovered by man is relative, and to the same extent false and transient; what is precious is only their methodology, if this term is proper here. You should know better than anyone that every expression of the truth is symbolic—that it is only a sign, a sound that dispels inertia and moves us to turn our eyes in the direction whence it comes. Speaking of truth as a constant initiator, you depict human existence not as it is but precisely as I would like to see it. I say this: that the initiations of the forefathers have become petrified, have turned into despotic values which by tempting and intimidating us, reduce the individual spirit to a resigned and even voluntary submission to them, or, by enveloping the spirit in a fog, veil our sight. But I wrote about this once before:

Everyone knew that Napoleon was not born an Emperor. A simple woman seeing him from the crowd during some splendid parade, might have thought: 'now he is the Emperor who almost lost his personal name, he is the ruler of nations—yet in his swaddling clothes he was nothing to the world, only another child of his mother's.'—Similarly, when I stand in a museum before a famous painting, I think to myself the artist painted it for himself, and in the act of creation it was inseparable from him—he was in it and it in him; yet now it has been elevated to the world throne, as an objective value."

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Everything that is objective is conceived in the individual and originally belongs only to him. Whatever value is in question, its biography comprises the same three phases that Napoleon went through: first, it is nothing for the world, then it is a warrior and leader on the battlefield, finally a ruler. And just like Napoleon in Ajaccio, a value is free and true only in childhood, when born unknown it plays, grows, and suffers in freedom, without attracting anyone's covetous glances. "Hamlet" flowered only once in the complete fulness of its truth—within Shakespeare, and the Sistine Madonna with Raphaël. Then the world draws these flowering values into its everyday battles. In the world no one needs their fulness. The world has felt in the value the original force with which its creator endowed it, and wants to exploit this force for its own needs; its relation to the value is dictated by greed, and greed is always specific. Therefore, the value always becomes differentiated when it is in general use, it disintegrates into particular forces, special meanings which do not contain its fulness and therefore, its essence.

Just as men need an oak not in its natural state, but sawed up in parts, so they cherish a value only in the fragmentation of its essence, as a multiple utility. Finally this utility becomes a generally accepted value, and the value receives the royal crown. The crowned value is cold and cruel, and in the course of years it completely petrifies, turns into a fetish. Its features no longer show even a trace of that free and open energy which its face once breathed. It has served so many passions, high and low! One wanted a bucket, another a rainfall, and it satisfied everyone, confirming each in his false, subjective truth. Now it autocratically dictates its laws to the world, heedless of individual prayers. What was alive and individual, immersed in, and fed on, one man's blood, now becomes an idol, which demands that living people, similar to what it itself was when it came into the world, be sacrificed to it. Napoleon as emperor and a painting enthroned in a museum are equally despotic.

In addition to fetish values, concrete and tangible, there are vampire values, the so-called abstract values, something like legal persons in the realm of values. They are fleshless and invisible; they are formed by means of abstraction from concrete values, because the law of cohesion operates in the spiritual as well as in the physical world, where the vapors from the earthly reservoirs gather into clouds. By way of abstraction from many Hamlets and Sistine Madonnas there arose a general value—Art; and in the same manner all the rest of them were born—Property and Morality, the State, the Nation, the Church, Religion, Culture, and many, many others—all of them from the emanations of the best blood of the most ardent human hearts. And each of them

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has its cult, its priests and its faithful. The priests speak with conviction to the masses about the "interests" and "needs" of the worshipped value and demand sacrifices for the sake of its prosperity. The State thirsts for power, the Nation for unity, Industry for development, and so on; thus, although phantoms themselves, they actually rule the world, and the more abstract a value, the more voracious and ruthless it is. Perhaps we can speak of the last war as only an unprecedented hecatomb, which a few conceptualized values, having concluded an alliance among themselves, demanded of Europe through the intermediary of their priests.

Yet in each abstract value, however its insatiable belly may have swelled, there gleams a spark of the divinity which can arouse our emotions. In it each individual unconsciously venerates the sanctity of some ineradicable aspiration that he has in common with all men; and it is only through this living feeling that the value is strong. Whether I eat to gratify my hunger, or whether I cover my nakedness, or pray to God —my business is only mine, it is so simple and personal. And now my personality is given social status, is elevated into impersonality, and from there still higher, into the empyrean of the superpersonal principles, and lo and behold, the single feeling finds itself included in a most complex hierarchically centralized order; the simple prayer has been lost in the boundless gigantic structure of Theology, Religion, the Church. What was a need of my heart, has been declared my sacred duty, has been taken from my hands as something beloved, and placed above me, as an anointed sovereign.

The poor heart, like a mother, loves its offspring even in the tyrant, but she also weeps obeying his impersonal will. And there comes a moment when love conquers submissiveness: the mother overthrows the tyrant in order once again to embrace him as a son. That is how Luther with his ardent heart destroyed the cult, the theology, the papal Church, in order to liberate simple personal faith from a complicated system. Likewise the French Revolution dispelled the mysticism of the throne and placed the individual man in a more direct and intimate relation to authority. And now a new rebellion is shaking the earth—this is the truth of labor and possession striving to free itself from age-old complications, from the monstrous fetters of social and abstract ideas.

Mankind still has a long way to go. Lutheran Christianity, the Republic, and Socialism have done only half the task; we still have to create conditions under which individuality can once again become completely individual, as it was born. However, the past has not been in vain. Man will return to his origin transformed, because his sub-

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jectivity, having become a universal and objective value, for long years flowered in its eternal truth there, on the heights. What is taking place is philogeny in reverse, so to speak: having reached its peak, the movement is now retracing its steps, following the same way as the one it ascended, stage after stage. That is why each revolution is a rebirth of the old: the monarchy is supplanted by a common council—parliament; parliamentarianism will yield its place to a still earlier form—federation, and so it will go on until we reach the original point of departure. But the old forms are now animated by a new spirit. The community in ascent was poor, chaotic, and closed; in descent it is harmoniously organized and infused with a general meaning. As for the starting point to which everything must return, it is individuality. Individuality will contain in itself all the acquired fulness. Centuries will pass, and faith once again will be simple and personal, labor will be joyous individual creation, and property will be intimate communion with the object; but faith, and labor, and property will be immutable and sacred within the individual, and outside they will be immeasurably enriched, like a tree grown from a seed. I repeat, the task now is to make it possible for individuality once again to became truly individual, and yet be experienced as universal; that man, like Mary, should recognize in each of his manifestations both his child and God.

However, values are not yet everything; against values one can fight. But how can one fight against those poisons of culture, which have entered into our blood and infected the very sources of spiritual life? There are nets of theories, made of steel, woven by centuries of experience; they captivate the reason imperceptibly and surely; there are the well-trodden paths of consciousness where laziness insinuates itself; there is the routine of thinking and the routine of conscience, there is the routine of perception, there are the stereotypes of feeling and the countless clichés of speech. They lie in wait for spiritual seeds at the very moment of conception, envelop them at once and, as though in amorous embrace, lure them on to well-beaten tracks. Finally, there are the countless results of knowledge, terrible in their multiplicity and inexorableness; they inundate the mind, establishing themselves within it as objective truth without waiting till hunger summons those among them which are really needed; and the spirit, crushed by their weight, withers in its overcrowded quarters, powerless either to appropriate them in an authentic manner or to expel them. Consequently, I speak not of freedom from theory, but of freedom of theory, or more accurately, of freedom, directness, and freshness of contemplation—so that the wisdom of the fathers should not intimidate the faint-hearted, that it should not encour-

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age inertia and dim the horizons, that a new sensibility and new thought should come into being, a sensibility and thought that will not immediately petrify in each of their achievements but will remain forever plastic, freely moving in infinity. Then there will appear those gay wanderers, men poor in spirit, carefree and curious, about whom you speak; at present they do not exist or merely seem to exist; at present no one passes, like a stranger, *by* the altars and idols, but you too, my friend, without knowing it, sacrifice on many altars and unconsciously worship idols, for the poison, I say, is in our blood. And I do not want to rivet mankind to the horizontal plane—it is you who write: "Let us advance, without looking around and without measuring the way." What I say is: individuality on this plane is the vertical line along which a new culture must rise.

M. G.

IX.

To M. O. Gershenzon:

The dialogue between us is becoming difficult; it has turned into an argument, which incidentally should not have happened. By nature, my dear friend, you are a monologuist. You cannot be lured onto the paths of dialectic; for you, logic is not a law. You are not interested in your self-contradictions, a list of which I could present to you as others present bills, if my taste did not advise me to refrain from this type of attack on the inward, *psychic* sense of your confessions. Still, after all, we agreed that truth must not become compulsive. What then is left to me? To sing and play on my reed pipe? "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented"—thus the children of the parable in the Gospels call unto their fellows, but we consider that we are no longer children. "Well sung," you will say with a kind smile to the singer, and continue past him on your way. "Happy journey to the promised land"—one feels like calling after you, for you yourself mention it; and it is the promised land, of course, that you rave about—its grapes and fig trees ("they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree," as is said in the Bible), its abundant pastures and cool springs, but where it is and how it is exactly—perhaps it lies beyond this phenomenal world—you do not seem to want to know: all that you desire is to reach it (for one must absolutely reach it, that is why it is the "promised" land) or at least behold it from Mount Nebo, for the "triple image of perfection" shines in it. And you will not exchange your nomadic restlessness and your burning thirst for cool water—the ancient thirst born of forty years of

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wandering in the wilderness—for the flesh pots of Egypt, and her temples, pyramids, and mummies, and for all the Egyptian wisdom and initiations. Like Moses, you have tasted of this wisdom, of these initiations, and yet you would forget everything; you hate Egypt—you have come to feel aversion for the mummified "culture" with its wisdom that does not quench *your* thirst.

What a difference between you and Nietzsche, whose burden, which is as alien to you as is all Egypt, you were consistent in not attempting to lift on your shoulders, which even without it are excessively loaded by the burden of spiritual values and monuments. Wherefore would you undertake hand in hand with him the dangerous pilgrimage into the cavern of the Sphinx, whose singing riddle ("who and what are you, stranger?"—Oedipus answered: "a man . . . ") strikes up a special, different melody for each one who presents himself. Of course, Nietzsche's problem is your problem: culture and individuality, value, decline and health, especially health. And hardly any initiation of individuality in our present cultural milieu can take place without the "initiate's" (as the theosophists say) meeting him as "the guardian of the threshold."

Nietzsche said: "Man is something that must be 'transcended' "—and thereby once more testified that the road of the liberation of the individual is a road to the heights and depths, a movement along a vertical line. Again an obelisk, again a pyramid! "Possible, quite possible!"—you hurriedly dismiss the question, for your loins are girded; and your ardent eyes measure the horizons of the wilderness—"first of all, I must get out of here, out of Egypt."

If you had been at any time and even if only in part a Nietzschean, you would have felt that in man, culture's beast of burden, who exhibits the shape of a camel (the smile is Nietzsche's, the pathos is yours) lion's claws cut through; you would have perceived how there awakens in him the elemental desert-like hunger of the predatory animal, which compels him to tear into pieces something alive, something heretofore feared, and to taste of its blood. This living and blood-filled "something" is called in the abstract language of the New Egypt, in its priestly books, "values": for they are wondrously vital and alive, since, as you have said, mankind has saturated them with its living blood, and breathed its fiery soul into them, although they sit motionless, on their thrones, as "graven images, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." But Nietzsche is not only a wrecker, a blood-drinker, and a psychophage: he is a legislator. Even before becoming the "Youth" that, according to his forecast, the lion must turn into, he breaks the

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tablets of the old values in order to trace new characters on new tablets, *unque leonis.* He wants to give a new testament to the same old Egypt—to "transvaluate" the same heathen family inheritance. He joins the community of the great carvers of the ideal; the iconoclast, the image breaker becomes an image painter. But what is this to you—you thirst for cool water, not for hot blood; for you are only a wanderer in the desert not at all a beast of prey; and in Egypt itself you are not at all a wrecker, but perhaps only—faced by the inquisitional tribunal of the priests—a sower of suspicion, doubt, disintegration; and it is not to your liking to legislate, and in point of fact there is nothing to be transvaluated, for your own valuations would essentially, in their very core, perhaps coincide with the recognized values; but for some reason you must begin with a supposed dethronement and dramatic abrogation of the latter.

Perhaps it seems to you that if values are to be revived they must first be killed—that they are not immortal gods if they do not withstand the ordeal of death. I think that you are motivated by a deep and secret impulse, diametrically opposed to those impulses which throughout the past centuries determined all the creation of idols in the world that the Scriptures call the heathen world. The genius of paganism projected its noblest part into a transcendental image or an invisible but transcendental idea—a suprasensual image—and objectified its highest part into a symbol, a likeness, an icon, a graven image; and even "on the shoals of history," as you like to say, in the century of Kant and the definitive enclosure and immuring of the spirit by reflection into the solitary well of individual personality, it strove to save "the idea" as "the regulative idea" in man's rational consciousness. You, without realizing it, are a typical representative of another, equally ancient and always iconoclastic impulse, to absorb the idea in the twilight of the unconscious. You do not need the "regulative idea"—whether transcendent or immanent, it is always an idea;—in itself it oppresses you despotically; what you need is a regulative instinct. You know and want God not in the visible sky nor in man's invisible skies, but in the fiery soul of the living creature, in the breath of its life, in the pulsation of its veins.

I repeat, a hoary old time, no less ancient than the hieroglyphs of Egypt, is with you in this thought. I recall my verses about primitive man who did not fear death as we fear it:

Ancient man, thou art mightier than we—
Because before inexorable fate
Thou didst not lower thy youthful eyes.

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Did he believe in the immortality of the soul? If he did, this faith was to him neither a comfort nor a hope; on the contrary, it must have eneveloped him in the deepest gloom.

But while within him stark despair crushed
His mind, and the darkness of the Hospitable Temple
Filled his dream with fright—
In his sinews ripened energy like the sun
And as it fed his arteries with joyous life,
"I am immortal" sang his very blood.

This is genuine belief in immortality, is it not? From all your premises it follows that the first perfect and true ideal is the instinct with its immanent theology (for it is in accord with nature). That is why you have no wish to make use of "the freedom of speculation" that he nevertheless demanded—and, faithful to yourself, you begin our present correspondence with the declaration that "about things such as God and immortality, one must neither speak nor think."

Excuse this typological exploration of your psychic and intellectual structure. *Amico licet*. But can one answer differently to him who declining the devices of persuasion (except one, and perhaps, the strongest—the beauty of words) proclaims *hoc volo*—such is my will, such is my thirst; and *ut sentio sitioque, ita sapio*. We must still investigate the sources of the will and the nature of the thirst. But such an examination would be insufficient, if we failed to locate the investigated will as an essential phenomenon, connected with the general change that we are experiencing.

What then is taking place in our day? Is it the abrogation of cultural values in general? Or their disintegration, which bears witness to their complete or partial paralysis? Or, finally, the transvaluation of the former values? However that may be, the values of yesterday are deeply shaken, and you are virtually one of those who rejoice in the earthquake, for according to you, if the old Egypt is not destroyed, the image of perfection that once illumined the cradle of each of its creations will remain buried forever in the inner vaults, under the wind-swept blocks of the pyramids. However, it seems that history is not being made under your banner, but stubbornly insists upon remaining history, a new page in the annals of cultured Egypt.

We shall not consider the accidental, unpredictable, irrational element in the course of events; let us cast a glance at the state of men's minds. The anarchistic tendencies are not the prevalent ones: they seem essentially to be correlate and shadow of the bourgeois order. The so-called conscious proletariat stands entirely on the ground of cul-

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tural continuity. The fight is waged not for the abrogation of the values of the cultural past, but for something that looms before men's minds as a supreme task—the revitalization in it of everything that has an objective and timeless significance—and for their transvaluation in the nearest future. The lion who has come out of the depths and leapt upon the accepted values has not arisen from the camel, and he is not only a beast of prey, but as Nietzsche also conceived of him, he is the lion-man, to whom "nothing human is alien." And now, in accordance with the prototype given by Nietzsche, he is breaking the old tablets of the Law and trying to scratch new laws on new tablets, *unque leonis.*

I think that in doing this he will uselessly spoil a considerable number of marble slabs and eternal bronze; but I also think that some unique and deep trace of the lion's claws will never be erased from the monuments of our ancient Egypt. Moreover, what is in question is not the content of the new "twelve tablets," but the method of dealing with values. The method of the revolution which has driven you and me, physically weary and exhausted, into a communal sanatorium where we talk about health, is predominantly a historical and social, and even a political method, and not a utopian and anarchistic, that is, an individual one, a method of those who remain and are settled, not of those who run away and are nomadic—in so far, I will add, as we do not at present touch upon the questions of spiritual ascent, of growth along the vertical line, where all rights and duties are taken over by the principle of individuality, the unique and irreplaceable human individual.

However, now we have again come close to its sacred circle. I maintain that individuality—the spirit that animates it—contains both Mount Nebo and the Promised Land itself. You oppose individuality and value, comparing Napoleon's mother who nursed him, with the same mother estranged and observing a son who, from the throne of deadening glory, now appears to her as a magnificent and cold sarcophagus of past life, past love. My friend, the deepest aspiration of the human will was well expressed by the Pharaohs who considered it their main task to erect a tomb worthy of themselves. Everything that is living desires not only self-preservation, but also self-revelation, knowing in its inmost being that the latter is self-exhaustion, self-destruction, death—and perhaps eternal memory. The wish to leave some trace after one has passed, to turn life into a monument of value, to disappear and to be preserved in the living cult of the principle that animates us—this is the source of the age-old human "aretaism," as the Hellenes, the Dorians, called their categorical imperative of active valor. The ini-

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tiation of mankind into the higher mysteries revealed to it still another divine and human face of the same aspiration for death in the name of life: truth, love, beauty, strive to be eucharistic: "eat my flesh and drink my blood; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Not Bonaparte's mother before her son's throne, but Mary before the Cross is the symbol of the heart before the great truth of the universal value. The value must be crucified, and put into the coffin, and have a stone rolled over it, and be sealed with seals: the heart will see it resurrected on the third day.

But here unexpectedly your voice joins mine, and both of us, in love and common hope, together prophesy not with my, but with your words about this, that the longing of the heart and the will of the mind will be fulfilled, "that the individual should once again become truly individual and yet be experienced as universal, that man, like Mary, should recognize in each of his manifestations both his child and God."

V. I.

X.

To V. I. Ivanov:

I find the spectacle amusing: you treat me as a doctor treats a patient; my illness distresses you as a friend, scares you as a member of society, and even irritates you. From the beginning your diagnosis has been wrong, and you are surprised at the ineffectiveness of your remedies. You try to conjure away my feeling by arguments based on history and reason, and blame my stubbornness for your failure. It would be just as effective for a father to warn his son that the girl he loves will not bring him happiness; just as effective to assure a thirsty man that he should not drink water, that it would be better for him to suffer, because his thirst is illusory and will soon pass. And I do not at all refuse to discuss your numerous arguments, and oppose at least one argument that methodologically encompasses them all. Heraclitus said: "It is difficult to fight against the heart; for each of its desires must be bought at the price of a soul"; following his example I say: historical reason, in its judgments about culture, is naturally disposed to glorify it. If you think it necessary to analyze the nature of my thirst, I am no less entitled to define the cause of your satiety.

And now I come to your remarks on Nietzsche. Once again you are mistaken, my good doctor. I read little of Nietzsche—he was not to my taste; and now I realize that my "pathos," as you call it, is not identical with but contrary to his pathos. He, being ill himself, found it possible to formulate a prognosis of the illness of culture, and on

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the basis of this prognosis, to legislate to the future. The man of culture is supposed to beget a lion, and the lion later to beget a child—"Become lions as soon as possible, be daring, tear others to pieces." But it seems that after the terrible war of 1914-1918 it is difficult to speak of the birth of lions. This war showed that in the civilized, educated man of our time there was maturing a predatory and bloodthirsty beast—true, but this beast is not a lion at all, and that is why I have very little hope that he will ever beget a child. No, it does not behoove us to write laws for the future. It will be enough if we succeed in realizing that we are sick and need a cure; this is the beginning of a possible recovery. And Nietzsche is strong only in his cries of pain.

It seems to me that throughout your reasonings there sounds one basic note: filial respect for history. You are averse to condemning it; you reverently accept everything it has created, and you are horrified by my bold rebellion against it. But in one of your preceding letters you spoke with conviction about man's original sin, referring evidently to the sin of schism and of disintegration into closed, self-asserting individualities. Consequently, you admit that man's will is to a certain extent free to determine his existence in one way or another. Then why are you offended by my assertion that contemporary culture is the result of an error, that modern man has followed a false path and wandered into a jungle from which he cannot find his way out. To be sure, history has been rational throughout, that is, everything that took place can be explained; but an explanation is not an evaluation. The deer developed antlers by virtue of an inherent law, as a means of self-defense and intimidation of his enemies; but in some species of deer the antlers reached such a size that they impeded the animal in his flight through the woods, and the species died out.

Is not the situation of culture the same? Are not our "values" something like these antlers—at first the result of individual adaptation, then the general possession of the race, and finally a burden and impediment that has grown enormously, and become tormenting, even fatal for the individual?

Yes, you are right: Your logic is not law for me. The truth of history is not consecrated at any point; it is a truth in process of creation, tested and verified by each separate individual. My own individuality, having tested it by its feeling, says to it: you are a lie, I cannot worship you. I say to Perun:* you are a wooden idol, not God; I feel God

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* An idol of pre-Christian Russia—Trans.

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as invisible and omnipresent; but you are trying to assure me that this statue is a symbol of my deity, and that once I have fully grasped its significance, it will entirely replace God for me. And although you reveal its symbolic nature to me in a very interesting, very profound way—I am ready to listen to you endlessly, I am almost convinced by you—its appearance is so terrifying and so repulsive to my feeling that I cannot control myself. I remember all the sacrifices that we offered to it, I think of the heavy, bloody sacrifices I will have to offer to it from day to day according to the instructions of its priests. No, no! This is not God! *My* God, the invisible one, makes no demands, nor does he frighten or crucify. He is my life, my movement, freedom, my genuine will. That is what I meant when I told you that my thirst turns away from the warm and spicy drinks of contemporary philosophy, art, and poetry, that only cold spring water can quench it. And in our existence there is no longer any water of life; all the springs have been enclosed in reservoirs, their water captured into mile-long pipes, then filtered and sterilized; finally this half-dead liquid is subject to city processing; we drink either boiled water, or complicated beverages of all sorts of tastes, colors, and odors. In the midst of these luxurious containers of thick and warm philosophy, of hot and aromatic poetry, one can die of thirst without finding a swallow of cool water.

Forgive me this protracted metaphor: it is so hot these days, and nowhere can I find refreshment; I drink and drink warm boiled water, I have drunk all the water in our decanter, and still I have not quenched my thirst. That, no doubt, is why I have been writing about thirst. I recall how on just such a hot day, many years ago, I drank spring water from a pitcher at a shady spot in a woods near Kuntsev. The air was cool, and it was delightful to drink the pure spring water. Even if by the will of fate, by the order of culture, I am living in the city, resting in a sanatorium, in a stuffy room with a window giving on a wall, drinking repulsive overboiled water, and chasing swarms of flies, can I help recalling that there are woods and cool places, can I help longing for them? And there is something else, and not the least important:

If only our hard fate would spare
The children, and not recur!

The logic of abstract thought does not affect my feeling; but the logic of history, which superstitiously bows before history, is just as incapable of conquering it. You marshal against me not only the inherent rationality of the past, but also its continuation—the events of the present day—as the ultimate and decisive argument. You summon

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me to open my eyes to the revolution now in progress; its slogan is not the abrogation of the values of past culture; on the contrary, it wants to make them the possession of all; it is not a rebellion against culture, but a struggle for culture, and "the proletariat stands entirely on the ground of cultural continuity." True, but what of it? What we see now is the proletariat taking the accumulated values out of the hands of the few into its own hands. But we do not know at all what it sees in these values, nor for what purpose it is seizing them. Perhaps it sees in them only the instrument of its age-old enslavement, and it needs not to own them, but only to wrest them from the hands of the exploiters? Or perhaps, after many years of enlightenment as a result of public education, the proletariat has come to believe in the claims of culture and imagines that it can enrich itself with cultural values; but who can tell? It may happen that when it takes these values in its hands, the proletariat will realize that, apart from chains and rubbish, there is nothing in them, and irked and disappointed, will throw them overboard and begin to create new, different values. Or perhaps it will trustfully lift them onto its shoulders and carry them on further, faithfully assuming the burden of "the cultural heritage." But in using the old values it will unconsciously suffuse them with a new spirit, and within a relatively short time, their molecular structure will be so renewed that they will be unrecognizable.

It is possible (and this is what I actually think) that at present, in struggling for possession of the values of culture, it is being misled; it thinks it needs them as such, while in actual fact it needs them only as a means for new achievements. Such is the unusual self-deception of our will. Man creates the airplane, thinking only of its technical usefulness—I will fly quickly or send Stock Exchange news from New York to Chicago; and he does not know that his spirit has moved him to build wings not at all for the sake of his earthly goals, but on the contrary, to enable him to wrest himself free from the earth and to soar above it; that secretly the hope and faith concerning possible ascent to other worlds have already matured in him, and that the airplane is only the weak beginning of the fulfilment of this dream that has already taken roots and confidence in him—some day I will fly for ever and vanish into the ether without leaving a trace!

Thus in ancient times man flashed out the first spark from a flint, having realized that darkness is not inevitable and that he had the power to conquer it, while today by merely pressing a button we change night into day. The conscious design does not reveal the genuine goal; the spirit conceives goals in itself and communicates to consciousness

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only the direction of the first step, then the second step, and so on. Only the spirit knows the direction of the path as a whole; hence consciousness feels deceived after each step. Wundt named this phenomenon the heterogeneity of goals: the goal set by consciousness on the road of realization is displaced or supplanted by another, completely alien to the first; and so link after link; the intended short straight line turns out to be curved—this is the spirit that imperceptibly and irresistibly bends the walker's steps toward its own dream, unknown to reason. What we see now in the Revolution does not tell anything about the long-range calculation and design with which the spirit called it into being.

M. G.

XI.

To M. O. Gershenzon:

My dear friend, have we not sufficiently compromised ourselves, each in his own way—I by my mysticism, and you by your anarchistic utopianism and cultural nihilism, as the two attitudes would be defined and condemned by the "compact majority" (the term is Ibsen's) of contemporary meetings and assemblies? Should we not each go to our corner and stay quiet on our beds? "How can your heart express itself? How can another understand you? Will he grasp what makes you live? Each uttered thought is but a lie." I do not like to abuse this sad confession of Tiutchev's*; I like to think that it voices not an eternal truth but the basic lie of our dismembered and disintegrated cultural epoch, which is powerless to give birth to a consciousness, an epoch that realizes the next to the last consequences of the age-old sin of "individuation," which has poisoned the whole historical life of mankind, all culture.

We strive to overcome this fatal principle every day and every hour by the uninterrupted creative process carried on in little and big cults—every cult is catholic while it is alive, even if it attracts only three or two devotees—and catholicity flashes up for a moment and dies out again, and the multi-headed hydra of culture torn by inner dissension cannot change into a harmonious cult. Nevertheless, the thirst for unity must not tempt us to yield and compromise, i.e., to establish an external and sham bond where the very roots of consciousness and, so to speak, the arteries of our spiritual beings have not become woven into one net. In the depth of depths, which is unattainable to us, all of us

* The quotation is from *Silentium* by F. I. Tiutchev (1803-1873), one of the major Russian poets of the nineteenth century.—Trans.

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make up a universal system of blood circulation that feeds the single heart of mankind. But we must not steal a march on sensibility, which is given us only as a distant and obscure foreboding, and substitute fictitious likeness for the hidden sacred reality. You and I have not a common cult. It seems to you that oblivion liberates and gives life, and that cultural memory enslaves and deadens; I maintain that it is memory that liberates, and that it is oblivion that enslaves and deadens. I speak of the road upward, and you tell me that the wings of the spirit are overladen and have forgotten how to fly. "Let us go away," you say, and I answer: "There is no place to go; displacement of a body on a plane does not change the nature of the plane nor of the moving body." Once I wrote:

To you, the ancestral trees
And cemeteries overcrowded;
To us, free nomadic space—
This was the judgment of Beauty.

Betrayal every day
A new camp every day

But at this point the truthful Muse compelled the poet, in rebellion against cultural tradition, to add:

The wanderer's illusion
Of hopeless captivity.

O for the sake of the cult one ought to leave the settled places and the trees of the ancestors:

Brothers, let us leave for the dusk of sacred groves . . .
The staff of exile is light to the children of gods,
The flowering staff of new love.

Broad is the flower-bearing earth and there are many clear glades.

They await our lingering lips
The dithyrambic unison of our feet

This *will* be some day, my dear friend, although as yet there are no signs of such a transformation. Culture will be transformed into a cult of God and Earth. But this will be a miracle of Memory—mankind's primal memory. Intrinsically culture is not uniform, just as eternity is not single, just as the composition of human individuality is multiform.

Seas are moving within the deep sea, some to dawns,
and some to sunsets;
Above, the waves aspire to noon; below to midnight;
Many currents stream in many channels in the dark deep
And subterranean rivers roll in the purple ocean.

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In culture, too, there is a hidden movement that carries us toward the primal sources of life. There will be an epoch of great, joyous, and all-attaining return. Then cool springs will break forth from between the old slabs, and rose bushes will bud from the gray tombs. But to hasten that day, we must go farther and farther, and not turn backward: a retreat would only show up the closing of the ring of eternity.

However, the majority of us Russians have always been run-aways. We itch to run, to run without looking back. I am absolutely averse to solving any difficulty by running away. I said before that the cultural "Egypt" was alien to you, like Nietzsche's *élan vital.* Almost to all our intelligentsia, taken in the exact and circumscribed meaning of a socio-historical category, Egypt is alien, and culture is slavery. And you, of course, are flesh of the flesh and bone of the bone of our intelligentsia, however much you may rebel against it. I myself am hardly so; rather I am half a son of the Russian land, but exiled from it, and half a stranger, one of the disciples of Saïs, where race and tribe are forgotten. *Oprostitsia,* to become simple, that is the magic word for our intelligentsia; in this longing is expressed all its uprootedness. It imagines that "to become simple" means to touch bottom, to strike roots in the earth. Such was Leo Tolstoy, who should logically attract you. Of a different stripe was Dostoevsky, who logically repels you. He did not want to "become simple"; yet what he wrote about gardens as the panacea of communal living, and about the education of children in the great garden of the future, and about the factory itself in the garden, is a program of social action spiritually right and historically correct, not a dream.

To become simple is treason, oblivion, flight, a cowardly and tired reaction. The idea of becoming simple is just as untenable in cultural life as in mathematics, which admits only "simplification." The latter is the reduction of a multiple complexity into a more perfect form of simplicity. Simplicity in the sense of a supreme crowning achievement is the overcoming of incompletion by definitive completion, of imperfection by perfection. The way to this yearned for and lovable simplicity leads through complexity. It is conquered not by flight from a given milieu or country, but by ascent. At every place, I repeat and testify again—Bethel and Jacob's ladder—at every center of any horizon. This is the way of genuine and creatively active freedom; but empty is the freedom stolen through oblivion. And those who remember not their kin are runaway slaves or freemen, not freeborn. Culture is the cult of ancestors, and of course—this is obscurely realized even today—the resurrection of the fathers. The way of mankind is an increasingly sharper

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self-awareness of man as "a forgotten and self-forgotten god." It is difficult to remind him of his being first-born; this is already forgotten by the savage. The philosophy of culture in the mouth of my Prometheus, is *my* philosophy:

> *. . . To trade,*
> *to practice art, wage war, and calculate,*
> *to rule, to be a slave—so that*
> *in the noise of days, in care, in lust,*
> *in dreams one should forget the freedom*
> *direct and whole of being. And the savage*
> *will wander in the wilderness, sunk in gloom. . . .*

The savage or he who became like the savage, having become "simple" under the spell of oblivion, does not enjoy his empty freedom; he is gloomy and downcast.

And in order not to be "a downcast guest on dark earth" there is only one way—fiery death in the spirit. *Dixi.*

V. I.

XII.

To V. I. Ivanov:

You are angry: this is a bad sign. Irritated by my deafness you place me in the ranks of the "self-simplifiers" who do "not recall their kin" and you even abuse me as a member of the "intelligentsia" (while, shrewd as you are, you flatter yourself—a son of the Russian land, and in addition a disciple from Saïs!). What angers you most of all is that I stubbornly assert my *Sic volo,* and refuse to argue. But this is not true: I argue with you all the time. For instance, in your last letter you maintain two things: first, that culture itself in its further development will lead us to the primal sources of life; all that is needed is zealously to march forward—at the end of the road, you say, the desired light will shine forth, "cold springs will break forth from between the old slabs, and rose bushes will bud from the gray tombs," i.e., culture, which is at present worthless will in its ultimate dissolution re-acquire its pristine virginity.

To this I answer: I don't believe it, and I see no reason for thinking so; only a miracle transforms a sinner into Saint Mary Magdalene. Such is, you think, the one way—the spontaneous evolution of culture. But this forecast of yours is in contradiction with your second thesis—that every man should overcome culture by fiery death in the spirit. For either one of the two: if culture in its own development leads us undeviatingly to God—I, an individual, need not bother; I can calmly con-

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tinue my business of yesterday, lecture on the economic development of England in the Middle Ages, build a railroad from Tashkent to the Crimea, perfect the long-range gun and the technique of poison-gas production; I am even obliged to do it so that culture may advance along its prescribed road—so as to hasten its longed-for completion. In this case, the fiery death of individuality is not only useless, it is directly harmful, because an individuality consumed in flames and resurrected, by this very token leaves the ranks of cultural workers. I will remind you of your own verses:

He who has known the anguish of earth's phenomena,
Knows their beauty,
He who has known the beauty of phenomena
Knows the dream of the Hyperborean:
Voluptuously nursing
Peace and fulness in his heart
He calls for the endless blue and emptiness.

Now this is true: "he calls for the endless blue and emptiness." He will cease lecturing at once, and surely will never submit even a single report to the scientific society of which he was a member and, moreover, never again visit it. Let alone the fact that "fiery death in the spirit" is just as rare as the transformation of sinners into saints. How can you say that I don't argue? You see, I am arguing and disputing.

But I like these verses of yours. Apparently you, too, once knew my anguish and thirst, and then you quieted down, and talked your anguish away with sophisms about the ultimate transfiguration of culture and the ever-present possibility of personal salvation through the fiery death. As you are now piously accepting all history, we indeed have no common cult. Or, rather, there is something in common, as is proven by our very friendship that has lasted so many years. I live in a strange way, a double life. In contact with European culture since my childhood, I have deeply imbibed its spirit and have not only become wholly familiar with it, but also sincerely love a great deal in it—I love its cleanliness and comfort, I love science, the arts, poetry, Pushkin. I am at home in the cultural family, I speak eagerly with friends and acquaintances on cultural themes, and I am genuinely interested in these themes and the methods of developing them. Here I am with you: we have a common cult of serving in the cultural market place, we have common habits and a common language. Such is my daytime life. But in the depth of my consciousness I live differently. For many years a secret voice has been insistently and uninterruptedly speaking to me: this is not it, not it!

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Another will in me turns always, with anguish, from culture, from everything that is being done and said around me. It finds all this boring and useless, like a struggle of phantoms rushing about in the void; it knows another world, foresees another life, such as are not yet on the earth, but that will be and cannot help being, because only in them will genuine reality be embodied; and I recognize this voice as the voice of my genuine self. I live like a foreigner who has become assimilated to a country not his own; I am liked by the natives and I like them in turn, I eagerly labor for their welfare, I suffer their sufferings and rejoice in their joys, but I know that I am a foreigner, and in secret I regret the fields of my homeland, its different seasons, the odor of its flowers and the speech of its women.

Where is my homeland? I shall not see it, I shall die in a foreign land. And sometimes I so passionately long for it! Then I do not need railroads and international politics; the disputes concerning philosophical systems and the quarrels among my friends about the transcendent and immanent God seem empty to me, empty and impeding my view, like dust raised on a road. But just as this stranger in a foreign land sometimes recognizes, with emotion, his homeland in the odor of a flower or the hue of a sunset, so I even here feel the beauty and freshness of the promised world. I feel it in the fields and in the woods, in the song of the birds and in the peasant following his plow, in the eyes of children and sometimes in their words, in the divinely kind smiles of women, in the sympathy of man for man, in sincere and unvenal simplicity, in an occasional word that glows or an unexpected line of poetry which pierces the darkness like a flash of lightning, and in many, many other things—especially in suffering. All these will be there too, all these are the flowers of homeland, crushed here by a dank, coarse and insipid vegetation.

You, my friend, are in your native land; your heart is where your house is, your sky is above this earth. Your spirit is not split, and this integrity fascinates me because, whatever its origin, it, too, is a flower of that land, our common land of the future. And that is why I think that in the house of our Father one dwelling is prepared for you and me, although here, on earth, we sit stubbornly each in our own corner, arguing about culture.

M. G.

(*Translated from the Russian by Norbert Guterman*)

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VARIETY

BLACK MAGIC AGAINST WHITE: ALEISTER CROWLEY VERSUS W. B. YEATS

The death a few months ago of Aleister Crowley, Chief Hierophant of the East and West, Master of the Flaming Door, Crowned and Conquering Child, and Beast of the Apocalypse, seems to have passed almost without notice. Yet in the old days men and women lived in terror of his evil eye, and responsible governments excluded him from one country after another lest he bring to bear upon their inhabitants his hostile psychic ray. It became the unpleasant duty of William Butler Yeats to uphold the forces of white magic against Crowley's black art during the nineties, and now that Crowley is dead the battle may be recorded.

Both Crowley and Yeats were members of a secret magical order, the Hermetic Students of the Golden Dawn; they evoked symbolic and visionary forms through incantations, they called up spirits from the vasty deep, they sought to penetrate the secrets of life and nature. But when Crowley showed a tendency to use his occult powers for evil rather than for good, the adepts of the order, Yeats among them, decided not to allow him to be initiated into the inner circle; they feared that he would profane the mysteries and unleash powerful magical forces against humanity.

Crowley refused to accept their decision. He went to Paris, and there persuaded the chief of the Golden Dawn, a Celtophile magician named MacGregor Mathers, to deputize him to wrest control of the London temple of the order away from Yeats and his friends. Mathers furnished Crowley with appropriate charms and exorcisms to use against recalcitrant members, and instructed him to wear Celtic dress. Equipped accordingly in Highlander's tartan, with a black Crusader's cross on his breast, with a dirk at his side and a skindoo at his knee, Crowley arrived at the Golden Dawn temple in London. Making the sign of the pentacle inverted, and shouting menaces at the adepts, Crowley climbed the stairs. But Yeats and two other white magicians came resolutely forward to meet him, ready to protect the holy place at any cost. When Crowley came within range the forces of good struck out with their feet and kicked him downstairs.

Crowley's defeat was not final. Though he gave up his attack upon the Golden Dawn, he was soon infecting London with his black masses, and his bulging, staring eyes corrupted many innocents.

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Among them was a young painter named Althea Gyles, an unconventional young woman whose work had appeared in the *Savoy*. Althea felt herself surrounded by Crowley's insidious aura, and went to her friend Yeats to ask if she could do anything to save herself. The poet was deeply concerned. "Bring me a drop of his blood and I will exorcise it," he said. Althea pointed out the practical difficulties of obtaining a drop of Crowley's blood. "In that case," Yeats conceded, "bring me a hair of his head." Althea thought that might be possible, but would nothing else do as well? "Bring me any object from his rooms."

Althea accordingly went to Crowley's rooms for tea, and covertly managed to steal a hair of her host's head and, for good measure, to hide one of his books under her arm. But Crowley suspected foul play. "Before you go," he hissed at her, "you must visit the *sanctum sanctorum*." Althea wanted to refuse, but dared not. Helplessly she allowed the magician to lead her down a long corridor, dimly lit by the light of one taper, until at last she arrived in front of a tabernacle covered with mystic signs and symbols. Crowley, after invoking the chthonian powers, suddenly pulled open the door of the tabernacle, and a skeleton fell into Althea's arms. She screamed, dropped the book, and ran off in terror.

But she still had the hair of Crowley's head, and when she had recovered from her fright, she carried it to Yeats. The poet cast the requisite spells and exorcisms, and Crowley was not long in feeling their effect. That night when the black magician went to bed, he discovered a vampire beside him; all night long she bit and tore at his flesh. His best charms proved of no avail against her ferocious advances, and for nine nights the torture went on.

At last, desperate from loss of blood and sleep, Crowley went to consult another magician, more experienced in such affairs than he, and was instructed as to what to do. On the tenth night, as soon as the vampire put in an appearance,

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Crowley took her by the throat and squeezed with all his might. And then, just as the other magician had predicted, she suddenly groaned and disappeared. Her power was ended, and she returned no more.

Althea unfortunately did not fare so well. In spite of Yeats's best efforts, she was willy-nilly drawn back to Crowley and finally forced to give way entirely to his baleful fascination. She even confessed to him the whole story of Yeats's abortive attempt to overcome black magic with white. So, at any rate, Crowley told me in Hastings a few months before his death.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Communication: THE HIPSTER

Sirs:

I read Mr. Broyard's article on "The Hipster" (PARTISAN REVIEW, May, 1948) with great interest because of my own delvings into the habits of the phenom. Broyard's article will not do, however, as the last word on the hipster. He has inadvertently tipped his hand in the middle of his discourse. This error is his acceptance of the stock "nowhere" character as the archetypal hipster. A veritable contradiction in terms. Mr. Broyard's description of hip clothing is right out of that *Life* magazine article he mentions, and several other assertions are equally suspect.

Your mad character of today and of the past seven years is a different individual from the one who sported the "thunderbolt" jacket and "balloon" trousers of a decade ago as reported then by "Apparel Arts" magazine. He is on a new kick in regard to his threads. Taking his cue from the various men's wear magazines he has been dressing in the height of fashion as purveyed by F&F, LaSister and other caterers to the sharp. The items on the hip sartorial calender today are narrow hat brims, conservative shoes from Lefcourt or Fellman, *no pegs*, and lots of linen showing. Kick-up shoes, behind-hugging jackets and the wide-brimmed bean-o are reserved for sad sacks, Marine Tigers and some wish cats from Brooklyn. Conservatism in clothes is the password. Broyard, like some language reformers, overlooked the dynamic character of the thing he was observing and, in overlooking, was by-passed.

The hipster is not always a delinquent. You find many hip studs, a great many Jewish boys again, who are and never will be anything but straight. The gimmick is in being with it, knowing the score, being "in there" (an archaism). That "pylon around which the world obsequiously careered" went out in 1941 and is seen today among the "little cats" who revolve around the group of hipsters who are very silent joes indeed. These street corner conventions are rather jolly affairs and not the gloomy, morbid and sickeningly egocentric set-ups described by Broyard. The white streak is a purely theatrical gesture and is matched up by the blue side-hair of various blond hipsters. Those dark glasses need a bit more explanation than that offered by Mr. B. Any hipster will tell you that they are worn so that no one will see the con-

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dition of his eyes once he's been on gage. That "lucifugous creature of darkness" is inapplicable since many people indulge themselves in tea-parties in mid-afternoon on park-benches, etc.

Be-bop takes a hell of a beating from one who seems to be a moldy fig, in Leonard Feather's terminology. The most important thing in bop is the phrasing and it's a sign of immaturity in a musician that he plays long, uninterrupted, windy phrases. Be-bop has all the best qualities of jazz. Where more tension than in McGhee's "Be-bop with Bird?" where more sincerity than in Dizzy's "Can't Get Started," more violence than in "Things to Come?"

Enthusiasm for music can be manifested in various ways. One need not go "trucking on down" the aisle of Town Hall at a jazz concert to show appreciation for the music. The bopper's enthusiasm is a quiet thing. He wants to dig everything that's being done and he knows that distractions will cause him to miss the thread of whatever the musician is building. You see this enthusiasm on all hands and on all faces during a bop concert or session.

The back-up is not a subordinate thing in bop. Bop back-ups are essential to the solo. It's those sustained chords behind Diz that make his solos wistful. Those saxes are analogous to the chorus in a Greek tragedy. They raise their voices, questioning the protagonist, agreeing with him on certain points, wondering about others. Just hum along with the tram in "Can't get Started"

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and see if you don't hear Diz say something.

That bit about tea being a heaven or haven is further romanticising by Broyard. Tea is indulged in with fellow initiates, fellow Knights of the Joint, for pure enjoyment. There is no dream-state similar to that of opium, there is no sentimentality. What you do have is a heightened sensibility to stimulus, a heightened risibility. There is now much to laugh at and the more you laugh the more you want to laugh. What a life!

That's all I have to say. Tell Broyard to do some more observation and not to let his pen get in the way of his gaze. This topic is very interesting and has much in it that should be explored. Previous attempts have been inutile.

Incidentally, the best book on jive-talk and one which offers a sound basis as to its development is the one by Dan Burley, it's called "Harlem Jive" and it contains some great jive parodies on some great and near-great things.

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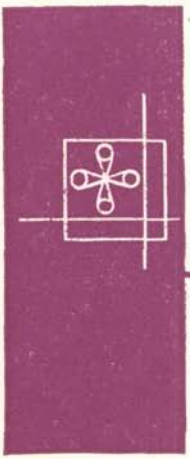

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